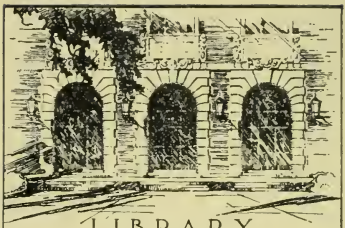

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WOMAN.

A SKETCH.

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WOMAN;

OR,

MINOR MAXIMS.

A Sketch.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Those thousand decencies that daily flow
From all her words and actions. MILTON.

VOL. II.

London:

Printed at the Minerva Press for

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1818.

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WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

An old Maxim contested.

As the present generation seems to pique itself on being more enlightened than any that have preceded it, we think we cannot more happily gratify modern taste, than by assisting in subverting old-fashioned maxims and prejudices.

It has been long a question with us, whether the superiority of virtue is most conspicuous in sharing the sorrows of "the house of mourning," or in joining the gaiety of "the house of feasting."

We are very ready to concede, that "there is a sadness that amendeth the

 heart,"

heart," and that, in a moral and religious point of view, "sorrow," so far as it relates to the amelioration of character and temper, "is better than laughter;" for sorrow humbles and softens, whilst laughter induces presumption and insensibility. But we doubt whether the human heart displays greater virtue in selecting scenes of misery, than in sharing seasons of felicity—in other words, which is the noblest effort of sympathy, to participate in the adversity or the prosperity of our neighbour.

The superintending Mercy that formed the soul of man fitted it to relish most keenly those emotions that should most powerfully conduce to the general welfare. Hence the sentiment of pity, that leads one human being to sympathize in the sorrows of another, is a feeling so soothing and agreeable, as to attract him to the performance of this pleasurable duty, and amply to repay him for all the exertion it demands. When the breast commiserates another's

another's woe, there is little, if any, bitterness mingled with our compassion; and what little may exist is quickly supplanted by the consoling conviction, that we are ameliorating the afflictions we deplore. Even the conviction of a superiority of fate may cause a sense of exultation in some minds, and of thankfulness in others (each according to its peculiar temperament), to assist in opposing the inroads of grief, and to sustain the spirit amid scenes of foreign distress. Here we see we are actually constituted to feel a degree of satisfaction in sympathizing with the sorrows of our neighbour, and that the act increases our self-love and self-consequence, whilst it gratifies our benevolence. Is there any heroism, therefore—any eminence of virtue, in fulfilling so pleasurable, so repaying a duty?

When we go to the house of feasting, and rejoice with the fortunate, the favoured, a very different train of emotion is awakened: we are ushered into scenes

of prosperity—we have to congratulate those as above us, who were perhaps once below us, or once upon a level with us, or who, by a felicitous coincidence of circumstances, have always been above us, rising from exaltation to exaltation. If self-love is the strongest principle of the human soul (as, we believe, is universally admitted), is that most powerful sentiment wounded or soothed by the view of another's extraordinary success? Are we humbled or elevated by the unavoidable contrast of our less splendid fortunes? Is it pleasant, by gratulations, to add triumphs to the triumphant? Is it agreeable even tacitly to acknowledge inferiority of desert or good-fortune? Is not the self-love implanted in us directly opposing to every superiority of fate or merit in another?—and is not vanity pained by the story of another's greatness or goodness? Hence we seem formed not to have pleasure in rejoicing with those that rejoice; the most potent emotions of our

souls

souls (self-love and vanity) are pained by it; and, of all our duties, perhaps it is the one that is the least repaid in exertion. Is not there great heroism, therefore—is there not pre-eminent virtue, in fulfilling so humbling, so unrequiting a duty?

Though we have pointed out the obstacles that prevent the heart from as freely participating in the joys as in the sorrows of others, we are not such cold cynics as to deny that there are a thousand bosoms that are perpetually glowing with the warmest, purest, most disinterested joy, at the more fortunate fate of their more successful associates. Nay, so highly do we venerate the human soul, that we do not hesitate to avow our firm belief, that many are the hearts that heroically enjoy the prosperity of an enemy—nay more, that rejoice in the success of a rival.

All that we desire is, to procure a due share of praise to every exerted virtue, most especially for those virtues that most extensively promote the cheerfulness and

happiness of society, thus encouraging their diffusion and exertion, and holding them up for imitation and regard. In proportion as virtue prevails, vice diminishes—in proportion as felicity is diffused, sorrow is banished, "as light dispels the dark."

If we have thrown only one gleam of light on such a momentous subject, we may hope to be forgiven for the introduction of this discussion—let it not be deemed out of place. Can the advocation of excellence—can the attempt to bring into just estimation every form of virtue—can the effort to place merit in its proper point of view, be irrelative in a work professing, however feebly, to unite instruction to amusement?

There is little fear that the Heaven-implanted emotion of compassion shall be checked by this disquisition. Highly do we venerate the gentle sympathy "that weeps with those that weep," but yet more warmly do we estimate the generosity

sity "that rejoices with those that rejoice."

CHAPTER II.

A Secret confided, but not kept.

SPRING had bloomed into summer, summer had ripened into autumn, autumn had faded into winter—the ever-revolving circle of time had run its round, and the vernal gales were again waving the snowdrop over its spiky leaf, and opening the primrose on the sheltered bank. No remarkable events had marked the silent lapse of time; only the ordinary ones of births, marriages, and deaths—the entrance into life—into happiness—the close and end of all. Mrs. Egerton had become the grateful mother of a healthy girl—the sexton's wife had buried a promising boy—John Wilkins, Esquire, mercer, collier, and tailor, had married Anna Maria, only daugh-

ter of the opulent Jonas Grub, Esquire, grocer, hatter, and chandler, a young lady highly accomplished and elegantly refined.

The first event is the only one connected with our memoirs, and the only one worthy our comment. It would be ridiculous to suppose that the sexton's wife mourned over her withered blossom, or that John Wilkins, Esquire, did not wed for love: we will only record, that as Susan Knowlesdon was busily searching the county newspaper for the public announcement of the latter event, she was heard very audibly to pronounce the words—"Provoking—tantalizing—teazing!" in tones of deep regret.

"What is provoking, Susan?" asked Mrs. Mary; "the marriage of Nanny Grub?"

"Dear aunt, no—that is only ridiculous. You cannot suppose I envy poor Nanny."

"Then there is somebody you do envy?"

"Not exactly envy, aunt; but here's a Mr. Wilkinson, who has gained one of the twenty

twenty thousand pound prizes, the very week that he became unexpectedly heir to an immense fortune. Some people are so fortunate!"

"And some people are so very unfortunate!" replied Mrs. Mary, glancing her eye over the paper. "My dear Susan, read this account—a lady, who lost her eldest daughter in a fever the very day her husband was made a bankrupt."

Susan's eyes overflowed as she read the melancholy detail.

Mrs. Mary seized the moment of softened feeling, to impress a moral on her heart. —"You see, my dear girl, that instances of peculiar misery, as well as of peculiar prosperity, occur in this fluctuating world. Whilst we are permitted to escape the one, let us cheerfully submit to the deprivation of the other—whilst we are exempted from unforeseen sorrow, let us not repine that we are not blest with unforeseen good."

A maxim inculcated at such a moment was likely to be impressed for life; for

there are periods when the heart is warmed to peculiar ductility, and, like melted wax, will receive any impression—there are moments when the mind is elevated to peculiar energy, and capable of best imbibing information. Happy the child with whom every such occasion has been judiciously improved! Happy the parent who has profited by every such chance!

Mr. Wilkins, in all the enthusiasm of bridal love, told the tender confidant of all his hopes and fears, the faithful wife of his bosom, under the strongest injunctions of secrecy (the very word is enlivening), a most marvellous story. During one of his professional visits at the Abbey, to measure Frank for a new pair of trowsers, when Helena was again seated in her dressing-room, and her child sleeping by her side, Mr. Egerton entered the apartment!

"Marvellous indeed! a husband visit a sick wife!" Stay, gentle reader: strange as this event may appear, a stranger yet remains

remains untold. In spite of the presence of the busy tailor, who might report his homely manners, Montague not only very kindly addressed his wife, but even pressed his lips on the smooth cheek of his sleeping child!

"Wonderful—most wonderful!" Patience—the secret's not yet unfolded.

As he hung over the peaceful slumberer, Mrs. Egerton, in an under-tone, which of course made Mr. Wilkins only the more attentive, said something of a name for the child.

"Oh, any thing you please," answered her complaisant spouse.

"Then, my love, this little one, whose dimpled cheek and dark blue eye so much remind me of my dearest friend, shall bear her name."

She raised the infant from its pillow; it smiled in its sleep, and the distinguishing dimple was displayed.—"There," said Mrs. Egerton, holding the babe to her husband, "there—did you mark that smile,

that dimple? Montague, I must call her Augusta."

Mr. Egerton started—blushed: a strong expression flitted over his features, and he bent over the child, as if to hide a trepidation he could not overmaster.

Whence this agitation could arise, was the doughty question discussed by Mr. and Mrs. Wilkins. Were we philosophers or metaphysicians, we might be able to account for that predilection to judge unfavourably which led this worthy couple, in all their cogitations, to attach error to the source of Mr. Egerton's agitation. It is certain they thought over every possible and every impossible form of guilt, and many were the sagacious guesses on the occasion; for the lady, in spite of the illiberal limitation of her *cavo sposo*, preserved not the secret confided to her faithful bosom, but generously called to her aid "all the talents" of all her neighbours.

Mrs. Wilkins reposed the secret on the loyal fidelity of her dear friend, Kitty; Kitty,

Kitty, within the hour, exposed it to her delighted mistress, Miss Patty Muddleton; Miss Patty, having sworn her sister to silence, gave her the story, "with what flourishes her nature could;" and lady Wronghead, in the frankness of well-bred ease, divulged the fact to lady Ruthven; by her ladyship it was circulated, with uncommon dispatch, through every rank of the community.

Nothing else occurring to create surmise, the Wrongheads were yet wondering, and suspecting, and supposing, when a new event strengthened all their doubts, and gave fresh materials for thought. The advancing spring had decked with verdant tints the hedge and field; the hawthorn was unfolding its fragrant blossom, and the daisy was spreading its snowy bosom; the blackbird warbled from the green covert, and the lambkins cropped the tender grass. Miss Muddleton and her lovely niece were inhaling the fresh breeze, listening to the woodland

woodland choir, and gazing on the hazy line of the distant landscape, when an elegant chariot, with a coronet on its pannel, four spanking bays, and two outriders, swept along the road. The meditative fair were instantly attracted from the works of nature to the works of art. The carriage moved swiftly along, yet not so swiftly, but that Miss Patty's sharp eyes discovered a solitary gentleman in one of its corners—her eyes having a peculiar facility for detecting *such* objects.

The bustling hostess of "the Swan," the host, the hostler, the bar-maid, the chamber-maid, and all the maids, rushed forth to receive the illustrious traveller. Such a thing had never happened before in the memory of man. Respect was wound up to reverence, and the first words of one of the outriders exalted reverence into awe —"My lord, the pavement is very slippery; your lordship will please to tread carefully."

The

The circle deployed in speechless amazement. What an honour for the appendants of "the Black Swan!"

Rude in health, vigorous, active, independent, the assembled group gave way with reverence, with envy, with homage, to the stranger. He stepped forth—a tall, thin, emaciated figure—feeble with age or disease—scowling with anger or misery.

Lord Melmoth slept, or rather lay down that night, at the village inn. The inquiries of his domestics, respecting the neighbourhood, were numerous and reiterated. By noon, the next day, the noble seemed ready to risk a short excursion, and bent his steps towards Thurleston.

Miss Muddleton had been shopping all the morning at the milliner's, opposite to "the Swan," and luckily happened to finish her business just in time to follow his lordship across the park. Mr. and Mrs. Egerton were also there, in their way to the village; and at an abrupt turn of the wooded path encountered the stranger.

As

As if suddenly electrified, the trio stood for a moment mute and motionless. Mrs. Egerton was evidently agitated, almost to fainting—Montague seemed collected in himself, calm, but firm. The earl's eye measured his erect form with stern displeasure.—"Still together!" he at length exclaimed, in a low suffocated voice.

"Did you expect it would be otherwise, my lord?" said Montague, with a disordered air.

"Oh, meet not as enemies!" exclaimed Mrs. Egerton, in tremulous accents, and wildly clasping her hands—"I, I alone have been to blame—forgive me!"

She held out her hand towards lord Melmoth, who, trembling every limb, murmured—"First draw away that clinging arm." He pointed to the arm resting for support upon her husband's.

Mrs. Egerton leant her head on Montague's shoulder, and, weeping bitterly, exclaimed—"No, it cannot be!"

"How! do you still reject my love—

still

still scorn my protecting arms?" said the stranger.

"Let us retire to the Abbey," said Mr. Egerton, in hurried accent; "this place is too public for such a meeting."

"I enter no abode where *you* are master," replied lord Melmoth, with a supercilious sneer.

Montague's eyes darted fire—but he spoke not.

"Helena," said the earl, "once my own Helena, and even now most precious to me, is not mine a prior claim?"

He tenderly approached her—Mrs. Egerton's frame shook in convulsive agony—Montague was alarmed.—"I am now her protector," he cried, "and will no longer expose her to such a scene."

He threw his arm around her, as if to bear her from the presence of the earl, who seemed roused to greater anger by the movement.—"Stay, sir!" he cried, in the loud tones of passion—"stay! Is this woman yours or mine?"

"Herself

"Herself shall decide," answered Montague, in a voice almost inaudible from agitation, and for a moment retiring from the grasp of the trembling Helena.

"Yours, Montague—wholly yours!"

He darted back, and caught her in his arms.

"Ungrateful, impious woman!" cried the earl, gazing with ferocious rage on the favoured Montague. In a few instants he turned, and hastened from the spot.

Mr. Egerton addressed his wife in whispering accents, as if consoling and encouraging her, and then gently supported her to the Abbey.

Miss Patty walked home with the important air of a first minister, who has just fathomed a mystery on which the fate of Europe depends. Shrugs, looks, and dubious words, expressed the grand fermentation labouring within, as the low sounds and transient flashes speak the inward workings of Etna and Vesuvius. At length the conflagration burst, and bearing

all

all truth before it, the family of the Wrongheads was almost overwhelmed with the astonishing visitation. But no language can do justice to the effect produced; morning, noon, and night, it was discussed and rediscussed—every meal was enlivened by the detail, and every slumber cheered by its images. Miss Patty introduced it into her novel, and Miss Wronghead told it to all her friends; Adam Wronghead, Esq. announced that such things happened every day, "when he was abroad;" lady Wronghead blessed herself, and almost forgot her own distresses in contemplating another's errors; sir Gabriel, evening after evening, fell asleep under the soothing influence of the narration; and Miss Patty, at divers times and in several places, quarrelled with her niece for protesting against the elegance of her delineation. Jack did not believe it was true.

How long this mysterious incident would have engrossed the Wrongheads, it is impossible to say, had not Susan Knowles-

don

don furnished fresh matter for speculation. The handsome young curate of the village had been seen handing her over a kennel. As the lady had been thus publicly seen to give her hand, of course it was to be a match.

This was a delicious subject for discussion, branching out into various ramifications. Had the gentleman offered or not? Was he accepted or not? Were his proposals made by writing or word of mouth? Did he address Susan or her uncle? Did Susan answer through the medium of a letter or a friend? And, finally, when were they to be married?

Dear reader, pray calculate the rich materials for controversy laid before you. Persons to act—one, two, three—each person, two modes of action: three times two make six—six and three are nine;—five questions to decide, each admitting two decisions: five times two make ten—ten and nine are nineteen. Nineteen possibilities, over which to talk, argue, reason, dispute!

pute! nineteen probabilities to prove and decide!

We do not presume to say the question was ever decided; for who argues to convince? or who listens to be convinced? the pauses of argument being sagaciously employed in discovering reasons to support our own opinion, not idly wasted in opening the mind to receive the proofs of that of our opponents: a contrary arrangement would bespeak a paucity of words and ideas in the disputants, very unbecoming for us to suggest; and as it would shew great want of spirit to change an opinion once assumed, it is very surprising any body should anticipate such a surrender, or expect that a controverted point should ever be set at rest. Such a close would presume humility, candour, good sense, in the convinced—moderation, modesty, ability, patience, in the convincer—qualities little thought of or exerted in controversy, and amply supplied by vehemence, satire, and acrimony in the one party, and by arrogance,

rogance, repartee, and exultation in the other.

The conversation at the Hall, therefore, continued with unabated vigour: Miss Patty and Miss Clementina disputed about the regulation of the several preliminaries; lady Wronghead loudly censured the want of confidence in the Knowlesdons.—"To think I should not have been told a word about the matter!"

Sir Gabriel hinted the possibility that there was nothing to tell.

This remark the ladies treated with deserved contempt, and pursued their agreeable cogitations. Though they differed in most of the particulars, they agreed in the leading fact—Susan Knowlesdon was going to be married. Miss Patty *predicated* the bridal day—Miss Wronghead named the bridesmen—and lady Wronghead dared to say there was a handsome settlement. Nothing now remained to be adjusted but the bridal dress; and one morning, while Miss Clemy and her aunt were disputing

disputing whether it would be composed of white silk or of white satin, Mr. Knowlesdon called, and announced that the curate was married that morning to—another lady!

CHAPTER III.

Cheap are the genuine Pleasures of Life.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, with the quick intuition of friendship, saw that Mrs. Egerton's spirits had been severely shaken by the late event, and concerted with her brother on the best mode of restoring the cheerful serenity of her temper.

"The view of nature," said that gentleman, "I conceive to be the most soothing cordial that can be administered to an aching heart. I know but one better means of reviving depressed spirits—the balm bestowed by acts of charity and benevolence; but

but that is a remedy that, with your friend, may lose some of its efficacy by its frequent recurrence."

"Yes, we must resort to new measures; and as I perfectly agree with you on the power of nature to calm the heart, let us contrive some agreeable jaunt, that shall introduce us to new scenes and new objects."

"True: what we every day see, however lovely it may be, too often loses its charm to the eye."

The result of this conversation was a proposal from the solicitor to visit a farm of his at some miles distance. The small estate was not only situated in a most lovely country, but was tenanted by a most interesting family. These worthy people entirely subsisted on the labour of their hands—exhibiting a picture of independence and felicity rarely witnessed, and which, Mr. Knowlesdon rightly judged, would powerfully interest the feelings of Mrs. Egerton—not the less so because Mr.

and

and Mrs. Primrose had once lived in splendid indolence.

When the party was mentioned at Random Hall, and a few hints given of the family economy at the farm, the circle unanimously pronounced felicity under such circumstances impossible.

"Live comfortably and happily without a regular income! My dear sir, it is impossible!" exclaimed lady Wronghead. "I fancy I know the value of money, and how far it will go, as well as any body; and I say it is impossible to live decently upon less than a thousand a-year."

"Nobody can doubt your knowledge of the subject, certainly," said the solicitor; "but some may, perhaps, doubt the accuracy of your definition of comfort, for instance, the possession of carriages, horses, and servants, as *necessary* to happiness."

"Oh, it is impossible to live in the country without a carriage; and then, of course, there must be horses and servants," answered the lady.

Mr. Knowlesdon smiled, in pity rather than in anger.

"Really now, sister," said Miss Patty Muddleton, "I do think that, married to the man of one's heart," (here the spinster introduced a sigh and an eloquent glance), "one might live decently upon eight hundred a-year, even with a family of children."

"Bless me, aunt, what nonsense you talk!" cried Miss Clementina; "you know nothing about the matter. My friend, Mrs. Frederic Jenkins, writes me word, that she shall not leave Bengal till Mr. Jenkins has realized a plum, for that it is impossible to live upon less than five thousand per annum."

Again Mr. Knowlesdon smiled.

"You are all out of your reckoning, I can assure you," cried the hopeful heir; "my old chum, Dick Listen, found twice five thousand would not cover his expences, and is now, poor fellow! looking through the bars of a prison, because he could

could not contrive to live upon ten thousand a-year."

"You must contrive to live upon a pretty deal less, young gentleman," said sir Gabriel, "or you will be peeping there too."

Jack stooped down, to ask Susan Knowlesdon if a man would be deemed mad for expecting a wife and happiness on a younger brother's portion?

She answered his question with such a mantling blush, that Jack felt half wild to make the experiment.

"Pray, good people," said Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, "look at that clean merry body, weeding the parterre: she earns eightpence a-day; and you see she is healthy, happy, and useful, upon an income of ten pounds eight shillings per annum."

Not one of the party saw any thing in common with themselves and the industrious weeder; and really, except being subject to the same wants and frailties, the poor woman did appear of a distinct species:

cies: cheerful and active, humble and patient, toiling from earlie t morn to latest eve, and then accepting as a gift her hard-earned pittance—apportioning her expenditure to her receipts, and gratefully limiting her wants to necessaries—a suit of raiment once a-year, a daily luncheon of bread and cheese, a humble hut and a winter's faggot—this was the brief catalogue of her wants.

Had we presumptuously proposed to place on the same page the demands of the opulent, our temerity would have been punished by the impracticability of the calculation; for though four lines may enumerate the *wants* of the poor, four hundred times four would not comprise the *wants* of the rich—even with the aid of Miss Patty Muddleton's literary talents, we question whether the statement would not extend to a quarto volume. This is not a careless guess, but the answer of sober computation. Let Miss Muddleton's modest stipend be divided by the weeder's

annual

annual wages, and she would be found to have eighty times more wants, and the chum of Adam Wronghead, Esq. more than a hundred times that eighty.

Is there any chance that these profound calculations may cause any of us to consider how much more than enough we all possess?

All the carriages and horses were put into requisition for the pleasure-bound party. Lady Wronghead, as her chariot drew up, exultingly asked, who could do without a carriage?

"Those who can walk," answered the baronet.

The lady frowned, and inquired if a basket of provision had been prepared?

Sir Gabriel said, it would not be necessary, adding, very foolishly—"What suffices for our hosts every day, may surely content us for one day."

Adam Wronghead, Esq. had, however, previously inspected the packing of a hamper of necessaries, *videlicet*—silver forks,

hot-water plates, liqueurs, spices, pickles, sweetmeats, and a few bottles of Burgundy. Jack had seen his brother very busy in the housekeeper's room, and under pretence of a severe fit of cholic, stepped in to drink brandy, and inspect the assortment. As every delicacy was placed in the basket, an emphatical groan issued from Jack; and the moment the business was completed, he slipped out to inform his uncle of the precious cargo.

As the laughing pair stood on the lawn, marshalling the vehicles, Fripon and a groom appeared, bearing the valuable load, Adam Wronghead, Esq. following in the rear, to mark its safe deposition. Where could it be placed? the back of the chariot would shake the Burgundy—the seat of the chaise would crush the preserves; this corner must be sheltered to keep the liqueurs cool, and that must be steadied to prevent the breaking of the pickle-jars; for Adam could not possibly dine without every article thus amassed.

Mr.

Mr. Knowlesdon, with grave looks, suitable to the importance of the business, offered his services to his nephew, and Jack was ready to lend a willing hand. A lucky thought! the roof of the chaise was exactly the safest place. Mr. Knowlesdon proved it was, upon scientific principles—But who could be entrusted to place it there? Adam loved any thing better than trouble. Jack sprung upon the wheel in a moment, and called "All hands aloft!"

Mr. Knowlesdon, with the most delicate consideration, undertook to raise the invaluable hamper. Jack bent down to hold one side, his uncle sustained the other—it rose majestically from the ground. Adam gazed with open mouth and distended eyes—another moment, and it would be safe beyond the reach of fate—But, oh, luckless speed!—oh, fatal care!—oh, hapless hamper! Jack sneezed, or coughed, or laughed—his hand quitted his sacred charge—it fell!

Fripon was overturned by its descent. Jack's sorrow produced a violent hysterical fit of laughing (a common indication of intense affliction, the ladies will tell us). Mr. Knowlesdon had alone presence of mind to bewail the disaster; as he stood by the side of the despoiled Adam Wrong-head, Esq. it was difficult to say which looked most desponding—whose face was the longest.

Fripon rose, with crimson-tinted waistcoat, and it was long hoped that some deep wound had caused the gory stain; but when the ruddy drops were found to have flowed from the crashed Burgundy flasks, Adam's despair knew no bounds. In vain Mr. Knowlesdon bethought himself of every soothing consolation—as how "The past is past for ever,"—"What is done cannot be undone,"—"People must be patient under calamity,"—"That it might have been worse."

"How was that possible? was it not all

all the Burgundy I had in the world?" exclaimed the distracted Timotheus.

The procession at length began to move: the Egertons joined it at the park-gates, and Mrs. Mary was to be called for on the road. The excursion was peculiarly to her taste: she loved to look abroad upon the rich and varied landscape—she loved to form one of a party from which all formality was excluded—she desired to behold a family she had long respected. Lady Wronghead's chariot stopt at the gate, and Mrs. Mary hastened to throw on a shawl, and bid adieu to her invalid.

Mrs. Rachael had recovered her petulance with her health—the enforced patience of weakness had given place to the irritability of constitutional waywardness. —"Going to leave me again! you are always leaving me."

Mrs. Mary had not passed her garden-gate for a week.—"Only for a few hours, my dear Rachael."

"Oh, go—go, by all means—it is nothing new for me to be alone."

Mrs. Mary glanced her eye on Mrs. Barbara Maude, who had kindly offered to supply her place for the day.

"I will do the best in my power to amuse you, Mrs. Rachael," said the humble cripple.

"Oh, but you cannot dress my knee—you cannot measure my drops—you cannot do any thing like Mary," said the petulant invalid, bursting into tears.

Mrs. Mary kindly pressed her hand—"Be pacified, my dear Rachael, I will not leave you." She threw her shawl from her shoulders, and tripping lightly to the carriage—"I cannot go with you to-day, lady Wronghead; but tell my brother nothing unpleasant detains me at home."

Lady Wronghead did not ask many questions. Miss Patty, perched with the coachman on the barouche-seat, entreated she might stay in her place; but as she

merely

merely said this, without any corroborative movement, and as, without waiting for an answer, she bade Samuel drive on, we do not know why she said it at all—there was not an earthly creature within hearing worthy attraction.

But soon the lady's admirable foresight was displayed, when joining the gentlemen, she hallooed aloud, how much she had pressed dear Mrs. Mary to let her supply her place.

It is not intended here to detail the many hair-breadth escapes, the perils by land, the perils by water, the deep ruts, the bottomless ditches, the perpendicular hills, the unbounded plains, the fathomless vallies, encountered by the social party—these may all be found accurately described in Miss Muddleton's last new work, "The Fugitive Prisoners," volume fifth, page 475, wherein Miss Patty ingeniously introduced the escape of a hapless pair from an impervious dungeon in Siberia, and shipwrecked them on the southern

point of Africa, after a few hours' sail, expressly that the events of this great day might be consecrated to fame.

There you may read how the travellers got through impassable roads, and got over inaccessible mountains; how they got great bruises, and got—no dinner; how for fifteen successive, or as Miss Patty words it, "successful" nights, they wept to the full moon with unclosed eyes, and met the meridian sun with unmoistened lips, nor food, nor sleep, nor beverage, blessing their sight for a long revolving month—in short, in that erudite work may be seen all the probable impossibilities that can assail any traveller of wit and invention.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IV.

Happiness independent of Wealth—Dignity independent of Rank.

At length the party reached the little farm, a low white building in the midst of a fertile garden. The vine flaunted around the casement, and the woodbine crept around the porch; every charm of nature was collected there, but art had little place. The hand of industry had filled the garden with herbs and fruits—the hand of neatness had trimmed the thatched-roof abode; bees were humming over the fragrant bean-blossom, and the flocks and herds were stretched upon the cowslipped mead; noonday warmth and sunshine "slept upon the hills;" scarce a sound broke the calm repose, save the gurgling rill that murmured unseen beneath

neath the embowering hawthorn—save the short bleat of the wandering lamb. Miss Patty longed to write a sonnet on the occasion, but she had neither her dictionary nor her list of rhymes at hand.

The appearance of the party soon displaced the tranquillity of the scene for mirthful hilarity. They had been long expected, and every arrangement had been made to give them a cordial welcome. Mrs. Primrose and her daughters, in their neatest attire, hastened to usher them into their little parlour.

It was a low apartment, with casement windows, decked with a profusion of flowers, principally collected from the fields and hedges. Miss Wronghead was astonished at the luxuriant and varied nosegay—the wild rose, the honeysuckle, the foxglove, the fragrant hop, the snowy bindweed, the blood-stained cowslip, the harebell, the anemone, the wood-sorrel, and innumerable others, grouped with appropriate artlessness. A collation of rural

fare—

fare—fresh cream, pure honey, home-made bread, and fruits, stood prepared for the refreshment of the guests.

Miss Muddleton practised all the condescending airs and affable graciousness she could muster, to temper the awfulness of her appearance. She had, to be sure, arrayed herself in her richest satin and her finest laces, perhaps with the kind desire of giving Mrs. Primrose a correct idea of the splendour and superiority of fashion, and thus raising that veneration her after smiles were to sooth. But poor Mrs. Primrose, in her clean white gown and her unlaced and unribboned muslin cap, was either insensible to the splendid display, or had been used to it, or, what was most probable, as Miss Patty declared, the good woman was fully conscious of the immense inferiority of her garb, and seemed resolved to prove that innate dignity in plain clothes was a match for pride invested in silks and laces. Miss Patty never would inform us whether the lady succeeded or

not

not in this experiment; Mr. Knowlesdon indeed remarked, he had never seen the spinster so humbled before.

As fine clothes seemed to make little impression on the Primroses, Miss Patty hastened to overwhelm them with her stores of learning: it was too hot for walking—what she would give for a book!

Miss Primrose, with prompt attention, sought to meet her wishes. A couple of shelves, containing a few volumes, were pointed out, and the good girl sprung on a chair, to obey Miss Patty's bidding.

The spinster approached the spot with the careless air of one expecting disappointment. The Bible was, of course, passed over, but Cowper's Poems, Johnson's Rambler, Shakespeare, and Goldsmith's three historical works, Greece, Rome, and England, astonished Miss Muddleton. Cowper she had seen—of Shakespeare she had heard—but of Johnson and Goldsmith she knew nothing but the name.

"What

"What are those other three little odd volumes?"

"The Vicar of Wakefield, ma'am, the Economy of Human Life, and Dr. Hawkesworth's Almoran and Hamet," replied Miss Primrose, pointing with her finger to each volume as she spoke.

"And are these all the books you have?"

"All, ma'am."

Miss Patty turned away with a look of contempt, saying—"Then give me Shikspur."

Shikspur was handed to her, and she was found in the woodbine-covered porch, with the book in her hand, open at the scene in King John in which Constance wildly mourns her lost child—fast asleep.

Lady Wronghead had a discontented sneer for every thing less convenient, and an envying sigh for every thing more agreeable than what she possessed at home—thus making herself comfortably uncomfortable about every thing.

The gentlemen, in the meanwhile, stroll-

ed

ed over the farm. It was small, but well cultivated; and as Mr. Primrose led them along, he described his little system of husbandry. His principal labourers were his own sons, three fine robust young men, whom they saw, each busy in his allotted duty. The farmer explained how he occasionally sowed a field with flax, to give employment to the spinning-wheels of his wife and daughters; and sometimes with rape, to supply oil for domestic and other purposes. The fleeces of his flock were exchanged for woollen habiliments for himself and his sons, and the skins of his herds for leather for their shoes.

Mrs. Egerton confined her walks to the neat poultry-yard, the gardens, and orchard. She admired the ingenious and cleanly pigeon-house and rabbit-shed; she visited the store-room, and saw many a bed and pillow stuffed with the downy feathers of the fowls, and many a winter garment lined with the fur of the rabbit. The garden supplied all the medicines

Mrs.

Mrs. Primrose ever ventured, or found necessary, to prescribe—the tall majestic rhubarb, the creeping camomile, the fragrant peppermint, the odoriferous balm. Pease were planted in profusion, to supply winter as well as summer food. Kernels of fruits served as spices, and the bright red pod of the capsicum, reared beneath the sheltering wall, was used as pepper.

Mrs. Egerton was charmed with the skill that thus rendered a numerous family independent of adventitious aids, and almost lamented the summons that called her from this interesting inspection.

At dinner the whole party again met. The eldest Primrose had stumbled against the sleeping fair; and while he stood transfixed with surprise, the lady awoke—perchance not a little delighted to behold a handsome youth gazing upon her, "with looks of love enamoured." "Nothing loth," she let the wondering swain lead her into the house.

The

The dinner was excellent and abundant —fine poultry, the fatted lamb, and fresh salmon from the neighbouring stream, with pastry, fruit, and vegetables. Sir Gabriel pronounced the old October excellent, and Mr. Knowlesdon smacked his lips at the famous mead; even Adam Wronghead, Esq. declared the perry almost as good as the champaign he used to drink "when he was abroad;" and Jack tossed off bumpers of sparkling cider, till he became as frisky as the liquor he quaffed.

In the evening a grand deficiency was perceived—no foreign tea, no foreign sugar. Mrs. Primrose had indeed prepared a pleasant beverage from a mixture of English herbs, and her daughters produced a profusion of rich butter, milk, curds, and cream—fine bread, and honey, clean and in the comb. The good woman accounted, rather than apologized, for the deficiency, by saying that Mr. Knowlesdon had expressly desired that nothing might

might be provided but what the farm produced—nothing but what the family daily enjoyed.

Lady Wronghead declined joining the tea-table, as if the omission had been made on purpose to offend her, and looked as unhappy as if, instead of only one day in three hundred and sixty-five she was deprived of one comfort, she had been deprived of it altogether—not but that, when the blessing was in her grasp, she almost every evening sent away the tea untasted.

The neat lamps and waxen tapers next attracted attention.—"Your bees perform you a double kindness," said Mrs. Egerton.

"Yes, madam; but except in winter we have little need of artificial light, for nearly half the year we rise and retire with the sun; and even in winter, a blazing wood fire suffices for the handicrafts of my sons, and the spinning or knitting of my daughters."

The subject being thus opened, every one had some questions to ask respecting the

the domestic economy of this sprightly and amiable family.

"Necessity," said Mr. Primrose, "first taught us how to supply our wants, or how to bound our desires, and choice now urges us to pursue a path in which we have experienced so much felicity."

"So much depends on being born to obscurity and poverty!" said lady Wrong-head.

"That was not my fate, madam," replied Mr. Primrose, his cheek slightly suffused—"I was born to wealth and rank; but by extravagance——"

"Rather say, by mistaken confidence," interposed his wife.

"I lost my property," continued Mr. Primrose. "With the wreck of my fortune, two hundred pounds, I fled to this retirement, rather in the hope of hiding my disgrace, than of recovering my tranquillity."

"Well I remember your first coming here," said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"Yet

"Yet more tenaciously do I remember your kindness, your generous confidence in a stranger—a man, too, of avowed broken fortunes."

Mr. Knowlesdon blushed—it was the only subject on which he ever blushed—the eulogy of himself.—"Your countenance, your address, irresistibly won my confidence—it was impossible to doubt the sincerity of one who so frankly owned his poverty," he replied with a smile.

"I can only say," continued the stranger, "that I had been denied the lease of half-a-dozen farms for which I applied, for the very reason which led you to accept me for your tenant—the confession of my indigence."

"The people were fools," said sir Gabriel: "the man who dares to speak truth on such a point will not dare to be dishonest on any."

"With my rescued money I stocked this little farm, and plainly fitted up this cottage. My cattle and poultry throve; and

and have returned me tenfold; my fields supply me with grain for my bread and beer, my hedges and copse-wood yield me fuel, my garden and orchard fruits and vegetables; the hops that flavour my ale flaunt in garlands over my hedge-rows; and if my cider passes too rapidly from the vinous fermentation, we are sure of a store of good vinegar."

"You make the best of every thing," said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"Ay, sir—it is a lesson misfortune has taught us—Happy those who learn it in a milder school!"

"But you said you once had rank as well as fortune," observed Miss Patty, insensible to the frowns of the solicitor at her indelicate question.

"Yes, madam," answered the farmer, with an air of quiet dignity; "but my former rank was very inferior to the one I now enjoy: I *was* the bearer of an inherited title—I *am* the possessor of self-earned honours."

Miss

Miss Muddleton was entirely at a loss to understand his meaning; but she hazarded no farther inquiry, lady Wronghead taking up the discourse, with—"Pray, sir, why did you change your name?"

"I changed my name, madam, because I neither desired to make my friends ashamed of me, nor be, in my turn, ashamed of my friends."

"Your sons are excellent assistants to you," observed sir Gabriel, either willing to give a turn to the discourse, or peradventure to amuse himself with the novel idea of a son being a help rather than a hindrance.

"In summer, my sons labour in the fields and garden: in winter, their evenings are spent with a turner's lathe, in jobs of carpentery, or in netting fishing-nets."

"And your daughters?" asked lady Wronghead, perchance equally edified as her lord, with the idea of children aiding rather than annoying their parents.

"Our girls have each their department," replied Mrs. Primrose: "one the household cares, one the poultry, another the dairy, and little Kate here helps me to trim the flower-garden."

"Your children seem well educated," said Mrs. Egerton.

"For what they know they are indebted to their mother," replied farmer Primrose —"my time was occupied in earning their food, but she contrived to teach them all reading, writing, arithmetic, a little geography and astronomy, and a pretty good notion of the history of their native country."

"Their education has rendered them useful and happy, and virtuous members of society—what can education do more?" said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"It was not certainly expensive," remarked sir Gabriel.

"In books and paper, the only articles required, I may have expended about forty shillings,"

shillings," said Mr. Primrose; "for our own geese gave us pens."

Sir Gabriel groaned aloud—the spectres of departed bills flitted before his fancy: he looked upon the youthful group, seated at a distance, beneath a spreading lime-tree—he distinguished the flimsy indolent figures of his hopeful heir and accomplished daughter; and his eye then fell on the nerved and manly forms, the intelligent countenances of the young Primroses—his swollen heart could not bear the humbling comparison.

Forty shillings had reared into the full expansion of every mental and bodily faculty a numerous family, each of whom could now subsist without further aid from the parent hand: forty hundred pounds had been expended on two beings, both of them, if possible, more helpless after than before the disbursement—both of them in the prime of life, incapable of supporting themselves, or benefiting the community.

Reader, this is no exaggerated statement.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

For the forty shillings you have the farmer's word, and may calculate for yourself how much paper, and how many elementary books, that sum could purchase; for the forty hundred pounds, you have only to send a son and a daughter to fashionable seminaries, and multiply the charges of one year by twelve or fourteen, and the net produce will demonstrate our precision.

"And what will you do with your sons?" asked Mr. Egerton.

"That, sir, would have been a puzzling question in the days of our worldly prosperity," replied Mr. Primrose, "but can now be cheerfully and easily answered: my sons will continue to pursue the healthy and agreeable avocation of husbandry—it is an employment that will never fail to yield occupation and to bestow subsistence."

"Ah, yes!" said Mrs. Primrose, a tear gathering in her eye as she spoke; "we have the cheering prospect of living and dying in the midst of our children—of escaping

caping every pang of separation. Most gratefully do we prize such a good."

"But how can you dream of calling your children educated, when they do not possess a single accomplishment?" said Mr. Knowlesdon—"how can you expect your daughters to make good wives and good mothers, without their understanding French, music, and painting?"

Mrs. Primrose smiled in good-humour—lady Wronghead in contempt; but her ladyship evinced some surprise, when, in the course of the evening, the young people of the farm sung many songs and ballads with much taste and sweetness; and when one of the young men, producing a tabor and pipe of his own construction, drew forth such merry tunes, as set every foot keeping time. Jack presently handed out one of the Miss Primroses, and Mr. Egerton soon followed with another—the dance was formed in a moment—even Adam Wronghead, Esq. as he gave his hand to Susan Knowlesdon, graciously observing,

how much such a dance, on the green sward, reminded him of the sprightly evenings he had enjoyed when he was abroad.

Miss Muddleton had just commenced a learned harangue on the defalcation of good manners, in *young* gentlemen leaving *young* ladies without partners, when the elder Primrose, directed by a look from his mother, besought the hand of the fair spinster, and Miss Patty, with admirable skill, turned her censure into panegyric.

The gay party long tripped it on "the light fantastic toe;" even the elegant and discerning Montague Egerton drawing no degrading comparisons between the unaffected and self-taught movements of the young Primroses, and the Frenchified and Italianized steps of the travelled Timotheus and the accomplished Miss Clemy.

The moon had risen in cloudless majesty over the reposing landscape, when the delighted visitors departed from the hospitable farmer's. Mr. Knowlesdon frequently stopped his horse, to take a view of the

low

low white building, over which the dark lime-tree waved its flexible boughs, and the clear stream, sparkling to the moon-beam, ran rippling by its side.—" With what mingled respect and rapture do I contemplate this simple abode!" he exclaimed; " for here I see what man can do for himself—here I behold him independent and useful—here I discover the resources which can make the poor man happy, the industrious man affluent—here I see the exemplification of that admirable maxim—' The shortest way to be rich is, not by enlarging our estates, but contracting our desires."

Note.—To prove that we do not write chimerically—that what we have just stated to have been done *can* be done, we beg to refer our readers to an account given by John Way, Esq. November 6, 1793, and since published in Mrs. Trimmer's " Œconomy of Charity," vol. ii, page 103, of a cottager's widow at Hasketon, in the county of Suffolk, rearing a family of fourteen children, decently and happily, on the produce of fourteen acres of pasture land. She kept two cows, whose produce of cream and butter she

CHAPTER V.

A strange Fête, and still stranger Counsels.

Besides the visit to the farm, another cheerful little party was planned and executed for Mrs. Egerton. Captain Mansel had prevailed upon Montague to accompany him on a day's jaunt to a small seaport town, the fortifications of which were peculiarly worthy inspection. The two wives,

carried to market, and brought back bread and other necessaries. She never demanded nor received *any* assistance from the parish, but by degrees placed out all her children into respectable services.—See also the account of F. Bernard, Esq. of the industrious proprietor of a neat cottage and garden between York and Tadcaster, a spot we have ourselves often noticed with admiration and respect. But who shall limit the beneficial consequences of human industry? This last notice is also inserted in Mrs. Trimmer's excellent work.

wives, with Mr. Knowlesdon, his niece, and sister, were therefore asked to dine with Mrs. Barbara Maude.

This good woman only invited these five individuals, for an odd reason certainly —her room would only comfortably accommodate six persons; and she gave them a simple dinner, from motives equally ridiculous—she could not afford delicates, and if she had afforded them, her rustic damsel could not have rightly prepared them. We give it, indeed, as an extraordinary event in domestic annals, but we give it nevertheless as a fact, that the aforesaid six human beings, accomplished and refined as five of them at least were, did really and fairly enjoy a most hearty meal, in a parlour twelve feet square, on a dinner of plain roasted and boiled, served on white delft, and attended by a single cleanly-attired maiden.

What on earth could a woman mean by giving such a dinner? and what could people mean by going to it? and, stranger

still, by enjoying it? We do not presume to explain these phenomena; but we will risk a few hints, towards helping our sagacious readers to do so for themselves.

Mrs. Barbara possibly gained part of her pleasure from the absence of all trouble and expence; she only attempted what she could easily execute—consequently what was pleasant to herself, and thereby rendered it pleasant to her guests. She probably received another moiety of her gratification from being fresh to welcome her visitants—unexhausted by previous trouble—unharassed by previous anxiety. She had little solicitude about a dinner that only differed from her every-day dinners by being more abundant; she dreaded no awkward cross-cornerings, for she had no corners at all; nor could the awful pause between two courses threaten to extend into terrific suspense, for she had but one course. As for the trivial mistakes of her rustic hand-maid, or her unfrenchified cook, she was more glad than sorry that they

they occurred, as they caused the party an uninvidious laugh.

In the evening, something was said of a sociable game of cards, and as no one objected, it was supposed the motion would be carried; but somehow the hours passed on so gaily and so imperceptibly, that the moment for parting arrived before any one deemed it near. This might be owing to the selection of the guests, such only being invited to meet as were intimate with, and agreeable to each other—Mrs. Barbara, simple maiden! only asking people to make them comfortable; not, as she ought to have done, because she owed a dinner here, and desired to pay a compliment there.

The fashionable mode of issuing cards heterogeneously, without distinction of persons or character, for appearance and convenience sake, careless what opposites are assembled together, reminds us of the arrangement of that once-celebrated dish, salmagundi, where exhibition is the only thing considered, and articles approxima-

ted that never met before—the biting anchovy next to the tasteless white of an egg—the savoury ham close neighbour to the mild-flavoured yolk—red pickled cabbage by the side of rustic green parsley, &c. just as, in the crowded drawing-room, are thrown into close vicinage the witty by the dull, and the spirited by the meek—the artificial by the artless, and the courtly by the home-bred, &c.

Mrs. Barbara's dress too, so quizzical! a plain gown, so inferior to lady Wrong-head's rich satin robe at the last Random Hall gala. Very likely, if Mrs. Barbara had been asked the reason of this contrast, she might have told us that she was not a baronet's wife, and two hundred a-year would not admit of the expenditure of two thousand—But this, like all her other reasons, must be pronounced vague and unsatisfactory. Who ever heard of people dressing according to their rank, or squaring their disbursements to their receipts? Some things, as every body knows, are indispensable

indispensable to all ladies and to all dinners, and certain articles must be possessed by all persons, rich or poor, high or low: if satin is the *ton*, satin must be worn, paid for or not paid for—if ruffs and rees are delicates at my lord's tables, ruffs and rees must be seen at his steward's—else better keep no company. What is the use of visiting, if we cannot do as other people? Really, we have no argument which we can dare to oppose to this sage logic, unless, indeed, it might be permitted us to suggest, that the pleasures of social intercourse do not *wholly* depend on eatables, drinkables, or wearables—that rational creatures are supposed to associate from nobler motives than irrational creatures—and, that though herds and flocks collect together in mute association for the purposes of pasturage alone, man meets his fellow to think, feel, converse—not merely to eat, drink, and display.

We are aware that we shall here be set to rights, and reminded that the faculty of

of speech is pretty freely used on all occasions. We will not cynically remark how often it is abused, but simply add, how heartily we desire that the gratifications of heart and mind may supersede the indulgence of the appetite and the senses.

What halcyon days would then bless the matron and charm the wife! The natural tide of housewifery would flow on smoothly, unimpeded by obstacles, unhurried by false stimuli; entertainments, fashioned on every-day models, adapted to the fortune and appropriate to the rank of the entertainer, would grace the festive board; the distinctions of station would be justly defined—the poor would not ape the rich, and ruin themselves by the imitation, nor the vulgar mimic the refined, and expose themselves to ridicule by the abortive attempt—each would keep in his proper station, and do honour to it, and people appear exactly what they were.

Have we got into Utopian regions? We do not think so. We hear it perpetually remarked,

remarked, that "nothing can be pleasanter than sociable parties, free from ceremony and undue expence;" then why not give sociable parties, free from ceremony and undue expence? "Because nobody does." A notable reason truly, and one that will continue to act for ever, if somebody does not commence another system. Why not be that somebody, and begin a new era in the annals of friendly communication?—give dinners without superfluities, and suppers without profusion—attempt not elegances beyond your rank, nor luxuries beyond your fortune—unenvyingly admire and participate the splendour of your opulent associates, but content yourself with the simplicity appropriate to your humbler fate: you will at least escape envy, unless of your modesty and good sense (not that we often hear of this direction of that passion). Convince your acquaintance, that you invite them, not to rival but to please them—that you invite them from a genuine relish of society, to enjoy their conversation,

versation, to link yourself to their interests and feelings by acts of kindness and words of benevolence; convince your friends that you pay them the compliment to believe that they do not come to you for the mere gratification of the palate, and that they are too generous to criticise the simplicity of your fare, or the homeliness of your garb.

Do you fear by such measures to lose your pretensions to taste and opulence? We fancy it will not be the first nor the only time that we shall incur the risk of being censured for blunt honesty, when we say, that in our opinion such pretensions are as effectually annulled by clumsy imitation of arrangements beyond our means, as by a total resignation of them. The only difference that we can perceive between those who give humble little entertainments and those who give awkward grand galas, is, that the first are respected and the last ridiculed. Our readers can choose

choose for themselves to which class they think proper to belong.

We know that we have been talking in a very extraordinary manner, and reasoning on very novel premises—to wit, that comfort is more precious than display, and mental more rational than sensual indulgence. But positively we are not responsible for all this heterodoxy, being in this instance, as in many besides, mere retailers of the sentiments of others; and as we are always eager to throw as much blame as possible from our own shoulders (feeling that, after all our endeavours, we shall deserve more than we can easily bear), we will frankly confess, that we have here given the heads of a discourse, held by Mr. Knowlesdon with Mrs. Mansel, as he gallantly escorted her from Mrs. Barbara Maude's to her own house.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

A touch of Metaphysics, and modish Ease.

It seemed as if the fates had decreed that the family of the Wrongheads should perpetually enjoy the enlivening emotion of curiosity, quickened by partial discoveries and occasional accession of mystery. The appearance and conduct of the stranger earl had long kept alive this spirit of inquiry; but time, that destroyer of all things (except female youth and female beauty), had insensibly lessened the acuteness of research and the excursiveness of conjecture. The name of the little Augusta was no longer repeated with meaning shrugs and looks, and the unravelled behaviour of the peer had faded away before the newer interests of—why Mrs. Mansel had changed her

her cook, and why lord Rochfort had dismissed his steward.

Just at this critical moment of expiring curiosity, lady Ruthven contrived to pick together a little fuel to keep alive the dying flame. Frank Egerton attended the same dancing-school that the charming little Wrongheads and the sweet little Ruthvens honoured with their presence, and one day, in wrathful mood, would not resign his place in the dance to the noble heir of Castle Ruthven. The master smiled at the young rebel, perhaps in his ignorance, deeming it inconsequential whether one little boy or another little boy stood first in the dance, and would very probably have overlooked this act of insubordination, for the spirited manner in which it was performed; but the countess being present, indignantly interfered. Aware that her noble lord Start had but this solitary claim to precedence over the undaunted Frank Egerton, she peremptorily

rily enforced it—but Master Egerton manfully stood his ground.

"Child, do not be obstinate—go down lower, to your proper place."

"This is my proper place; I came here first, and have a right to stay here."

"No such thing, child."

"Why not? I can dance as well as Start."

"Start, indeed! Speak more respectfully of your superiors, sir."

"Superiors! I don't understand you, ma'am," said Frank.

"Blockhead, is he not the son of a nobleman?" exclaimed the lady, waxing wroth.

"And am not I the son of a gentleman? What is the difference?"

"Difference, indeed!" repeated the lady, in a tone of ineffable contempt. "Pray, Mr. Son-of-a-Gentleman, is your mamma a lady?"

"To be sure she is—she is not a gentleman."

"Stupid!"

"Stupid! I mean, is she called a lady?" vociferated the countess.

"She was once," replied Frank.

The lady's voice was no longer in alt; she mildly said—"Indeed, my dear? and can you tell me, my love, what lady she was called?"

We have repeatedly disclaimed all pretensions to metaphysical disquisition, or we could lead our readers through a very pretty and not very abstruse investigation of the mental operation which in a moment softened down the acrimony of pride to the blandishment of flattery; we could shew how the passions successively yield to each other, as the tiger conquers the wolf, to be in its turn vanquished by the lion. Lady Ruthven's pride was subdued by her curiosity; hence the tone of menace was changed to the accents of endearment.

We risk this brief notice, to express our opinion, that very humble talents may acquire a sufficient insight into the mysteries

ries of intellectual operations, to answer all the purposes of moral cultivation.

We know not the secret agency by which the seed bursts into the germ, and the germ rises into the flourishing plant; we know not by what vegetable instinct each herb draws from the earth those juices best adapted to its nourishment; we only know, that certain seeds produce certain plants, and that certain plants possess certain qualities. Thus informed, we know which seeds to sow, and which to shun. It is even so with the human mind: those who least philosophically understand the first circulation or subsequent growth of their several affections, well know that such affections *do* exist, and *can* learn how to check the advance of evil propensities, and how to forward the growth of amiable dispositions—But, with a thousand apologies for our disrespectful desertion, we return to lady Ruthven.

"And can you remember, my love, what lady she was called?"

"Lady

"Lady Helena Melmoth."

"Lady Helena Melmoth!"

"Yes, the same as my other papa, lord Melmoth."

Lady Ruthven was overwhelmed with this mass of evidence: the fact must be now undeniable, for, besides this direct testimony of the innocent Frank, lady Ruthven had received other corroborating proof. The park scene had been detailed to her by her waiting-woman, with many a brilliant addition: in her present state of degradation, she was not very delicate as to the means of information, and unblushingly licensed the shameless tattle of her artful abigail. This favoured personage was courted by a village swain, who had given her a curious description of all he had seen or heard, mingled with much that he had neither heard nor seen. This delicate *melange*, composed of the rustic lover's conjectures, the abigail's invention, and the countess's wit, formed a very striking composition,

destitute

destitute of one attribute, indeed—destitute of truth.

In a company, in which Mrs. Egerton was not present, this ingenious and delicate production was published, with every comment to make a certain impression on the hearers, and Helena was of course delightfully scanned. Little was lady Ruthven aware, that the strongest feeling she raised in her audience was contempt of her malice; for though they joined in the passing joke and the passing censure, they felt the difference of this gratuitous calumniation and the generous advocation of the honourable Helena Egerton. Miss Patty, indeed, "purtested" that it was much more "natural" to hear lady Ruthven's defamation than Mrs. Egerton's extenuation.

At a ball, at which Mrs. Egerton was present, the countess expected to enjoy the first fruits of her labours, in the public reprobation and avoidance of Helena. But

if

if there is a good genius that nourishes and protects good thoughts, there is also a good genius that disperses and eradicates evil thoughts, as the amiable often find to their comfort, and the vicious to their cost.

The unconscious Helena joined the gay circle, "disposed to please and to be pleased*." She demanded no honours—she courted no distinctions—she feared no malignity, for she felt none; sportive, artless, and frank, she was happy, and she diffused happiness. Lady Ruthven had entrenched herself with every thing that could extort respect, or claim attention. Her elegant barouche, with four horses, dashed past the simple chariot that contained Mrs. Egerton and her husband; she entered the ball-room resplendent with jewels and embroidery; Helena followed soon after, with nothing to distinguish her but her—manners.

Lady Ruthven opened the ball, with smiles of exultation no art could conceal.

* Reader, the whole secret of social enjoyment.

About half way down the dance stood the unaffected Helena: no diamond glittered on her brow—no plumes rose majestic over her polished forehead—nothing to inspire awe or infuse terror; yet how came it that as the joyous countess approached the spot, her smiles became distorted, her motions ungraceful? how came it, that as she took the hand of the wicked and despicable Helena, her own trembled? and that her confident eye sunk beneath the serene glance of the unassuming Mrs. Egerton? Oh, it was the tribute enforced by conscience!—the homage due to innocence!

Helena enjoyed society—and who that has a heart does not? She loved the mingling circle and the sprightly dance. Mr. Knowlesdon introduced several partners to her, actuated, simple man! by their characters rather than their rank; it was inevitable, therefore, that he should commit terrible mistakes. He was in the act of leading up the son of a merchant, when Miss Patty Muddleton kindly interfered.

—"I can't

—" I can't conceive how that young man got here! You must not dance with him, Mrs. Egerton; so you can say you are engaged."

" But I am not engaged."

Miss Patty smiled with sovereign contempt at this ignorance of ball-room management; for as poets are permitted, or take without permission, certain licences of expression, so all young ladies, from time immemorial, indulge themselves in a latitude of language in the arrangement of partners.

" Mr. Barton is the grandson of a grocer," breathlessly exclaimed Miss Patty, expecting to overwhelm with such horrible intelligence the genteel nerves (if she had any such) of the quiet Mrs. Egerton; but, oh shame to elegance! shame to modish pride! the undismayed Helena only gaily replied—" My dear madam, I am not going to dance with Mr. Barton's grandfather, but with Mr. Knowlesdon's friend,"

and complacently gave her hand to the youth.

Had she given it to the ghost of his ancestor, of trading memory, Miss Patty could not, with more consternation, have turned up her eyes*.

Whether Mrs. Egerton depended on the stubborn fact, that she was herself the same identical being, whoever was her partner—that his honours could not add to hers, or his inferiority diminish her consequence—or whether she really did not believe the immense difference between the blood of a noble and that of a commoner, certain it is, that she treated Mr. Barton with exactly the same chastened frankness as in the course of the evening she displayed towards lord Rochfort, Adam Wronghead, Esq. and captain Mansel.

Susan

* Miss Patty seems very properly to have forgotten her own father's trading fame—who remembers poor relatives? It is enough to recollect rich ones to the hundredth generation.

Susan Knowlesdon, bewildered with the gaiety of the scene, and with the number of strangers moving around her, was continually recurring to her uncle for information.—" My dear sir, who is that gentleman?"

Mr. Knowlesdon mistook the direction of her eye—" Mr. Barton, Susan."

" And who is that next to him?"

" Lord Rochfort."

The mistake was complete—Susan had first looked at the peer, and last at the commoner. It happened (for odd things will sometimes happen) that both the gentlemen, probably attracted by the pointed gaze of Susan's bright eye, had each resolved to ask her hand for the ensuing dances. The brisk noble was, however, at her side much before the tardy Mr. Barton.

Under the impression of her recent mistake, this, however, was a very unpalatable arrangement to the fair belle; she contrived, therefore, at the moment, dexterously to avert her head from her suppli-

cant, and laughing immoderately at what was best known to herself, to give the supposed titled laggard time to approach.

However adroitly practice enables young ladies to perform this manœuvre, yet they may be assured, that ninety-nine times out of a hundred the trick is seen through, and (the term is rather harsh) despised. Lord Rochfort, in a moment transformed from a gallant admirer to an exasperated contemner, turned from the artful fair, and sought a more courteous damsel. Mr. Barton led his triumphant partner to the dance.

The solicitor had marked the whole transaction, and, with his usual incivility, exulted in what he was pleased to call the defeat of the cunning of his niece. At the end of the first dance, as Susan was seated, regaling herself with the pretty nothings of the fancied earl, Mr. Knowlesdon contrived to whisper in her ear—"You have done wisely, Susan, in selecting a partner nearest your own rank."

"Am

"Am I not dancing with lord Rochfort?" exclaimed the dismayed Susan.

"No, child, no," responded the malicious lawyer, "you are sitting still with Mr. Barton."

Susan was electrified; her smiles vanished, and a pouting lip and scorn-darting eye met the gaze of her hitherto enraptured partner. No longer courting his attention—no longer drawing her arm through his, in all the innocent frankness of guileless beauty, the grocer's grandson began to wonder what had happened. The second dance was heavily got through, and Susan retired from the festive throng, with the loss of a second admirer.

As, leaning on the arm of her uncle, she past down a dark and narrow passage, in her way to the carriage, she was struck by the sound of her name, uttered in no respectful or flattering tones. She stopped, overcome with rage and shame, her uncle yielding to her pausing step, either to rescue her from the confusion of meeting

her censurers, or to give her the benefit of overhearing all their strictures.

A knot of beaux, a few yards from the spot, were waiting for lemonade, to convey to their partners. Lord Rochfort's voice was first heard.—"So, Barton, you were devilishly lucky! the lady would have you, *nolens volens*—she shirked me, for your sake, in high style."

"The damsel proved somewhat capricious, my lord, and made me pay the price of many frowns for her first gracious smiles," said Mr. Barton.

"All your own fault, my fine fellow. You were so whimsically shy, so modest, in spite of the encouragement you received —the pretty arm thrown so lovingly through yours."

"Upon my word, my lord," stammered the uninitiated youth, "I know not how the lady's arm came there; I am sure I myself would not have presumed——"

"Oh, too coy by half. Surely you do not require young ladies to come *more* forward?"

ward?" The earl spoke with a very provoking archness.

"That would not be very possible," replied the modest young man.

"Come, come, confess the hand may be yours for asking."

"Mine, or yours, or any body's, I fancy," said Mr. Barton—"But Heaven forefend me from hands so easily beguiled!"

Poor, poor—dear, dear Susan Knowlesdon! That she should precisely hear what most of her sex escape hearing! But who could suppose young men had such discrimination!—such odd notions of propriety, delicacy, female reserve, and all those obsolete maiden qualities! Where could they have *heard* of them? Certainly only from their grandmothers; in this enlightened age, they can never hope to *see* such things—they are gone by, with tuckers and tippets.

CHAPTER VII.

The Uncouthness of the opening Sentiments amply compensated by the Elegance of the closing Periods.

Miss Patty Muddleton's concealed, and lady Ruthven's open malice, both equally failed to undermine the peace or the consequence of Mrs. Egerton. Conscious that she deserved neither censure nor neglect, Helena was long blind to the malignant efforts of these ladies; and when she discovered them, she pitied the folly, and despised the attempts of both. Thus her peace remained uninvaded, and her dignity unshaken, because her good sense and good temper enabled her to oppose an impervious shield to the darts of criticism. Perhaps she would have been more applauded, if, instead of using an inoffensive weapon

weapon of self-defence, she had, porcupine-like, opposed dart to dart, and wounded those who sought to wound her. But this was not the system of Helena Egerton—she preferred the innoxious mode of self-protection; and while she preserved herself from injury, desired also to preserve herself from revenge. She often smilingly declared, that to return sarcasm for sarcasm, or rudeness for rudeness, was only humbling one's self to a level with the rude and the impertinent, and that it was beneath a Christian thus to repay evil for evil—not that she was of that indiscriminating temperament as to be "all things to all men;" to meet those she despised with the same friendly warmth that she greeted those she loved; to welcome, with the same cordial smiles, those she censured as those she approved—such conduct was equally against her principles. Mrs. Egerton acted upon the broad basis of justice and benevolence: she mildly but distinctly marked her reprobation of

every form of vice or intentional error, not from policy, but a sense of duty; she calmly judged and generously forgave every incivility and unkindness she herself experienced, because she loved concord and not warfare—because she would not taint existence with unnecessary vexation.

We have seen that lady Ruthven felt and acknowledged the power of her mild influence, and Miss Patty Muddleton had sought to elude it in vain: in spite of all her endeavours, she stood in awe of the unreproaching Helena; and though she could abuse her in absence with delightful volubility, she was compelled, in her presence, to assume airs of graciousness and smiles of complacency.

The recorded crime of passing her without speaking, Miss Patty had essayed to work up into open dissension; but she found Mrs. Egerton was neither to be needlessly irritated nor causelessly pacified—she was not the victim of impulse

urged

urged by every different passion, as, in turn, each predominated—she was the votary of reason. She continued to treat Miss Patty with a quiet civility, equally distant from contempt and respect: perhaps the maiden would not have been more touched by the sternest displeasure, for here she had nothing to talk about—no cutting speeches to repeat, no severe looks to describe—in short, she had nothing to do but to be quiet. How teazing for a woman of any spirit!

Mr. Knowlesdon, one morning, after marking one of Miss Patty's futile* attempts to provoke Mrs. Egerton, very warmly remonstrated with that lady on her undue patience—"Why overlook that woman's impertinence?"

Mrs. Egerton smiled—"It is no easy matter,

* Here we see the peculiar propriety of our expression in calling Mrs. Egerton's defence a *shield,* for we find it not only protecting her from the darts of malice, but, by its imperviousness, causing the dart to recoil upon the darter.

matter, my dear sir, to rouse my displeasure; the *unmerited* censure of friends I do not easily credit—the unmerited censure of enemies I despise."

"But when merited, Helena?" said her husband.

"Why, then, be it from friend or from foe, I ought to profit by it—not aggravate it by scorn."

"Is guilt, then, alone decried? does innocence always escape calumny?" exclaimed Mr. Knowlesdon energetically.

"I do not say so," replied Mrs. Egerton; "but I do say, that, during my short life, I have marked with undeviating certainty, that, sooner or later, truth prevails over falsehood—virtue triumphs over guilt."

"I admire your creed, I honour your practice, and therefore, my dear Mrs. Egerton, do I desire that society may profit by your strictures." The solicitor spoke with all his heart.

Mrs. Egerton, laughing, answered—"Indeed,

deed, my friend, the herculean labour of general reformation is equally beyond my ability and my assumption—it is enough for me to watch and amend myself."

"I tell you what," said Mr. Egerton, "if the good old maxim, 'Let every one mend one,' was universally adopted, great advance would be made towards human perfectibility."

"Admirable!—nothing could be more effective," replied the solicitor.

"And yet, admirable as it is, no maxim is less considered, or less acted upon."

"Then I heartily wish the wisest genius of the age, whoever he may be, would give the powers of his mind to the enforcement of this glorious axiom."

"There is certainly something very novel and unique," replied Mr. Egerton, "in the idea of confining our criticisms to our own faults. This little commentary seems already to have given it force and prominence."

"Then,

"Then, as a stranger, let us give it kindly welcome," said Mrs. Egerton.

The solicitor assumed a heroic air.—"Then farewell, a long farewell to the high-seasoned joke, the cutting repartee, the pointed jest, the barbed satire!—farewell to every charm of social conversation!—farewell to rhetorical wit and printed scandal! To think only of our own faults, to amend only our own errors—Oh! preposterous selfishness! conducting to no earthly good but the diminution of human frailty and the increase of human happiness!"

The conversation (we use the word legitimately) was, at this point, interrupted by the appearance of Miss Patty Muddleton, who, however, kindly compensated for the interruption, by treating the circle with more than a moderate share of talking. We were going to say—a *reasonable* share, but we thought the word looked out of place, applied as descriptive of the

conference

conference we are about to record—modestly, therefore, declining the unappropriate term, we proceed.

Miss Muddleton called at the Abbey, in her way from Castle Ruthven; and though always elegant in her language, was most strikingly so this morning. Half out of breath with eagerness to communicate the news, she began her luminous speech—" I *got* up early this morning, on purpose to *get* to Ruthven as soon as possible, that I might *get* an early peep at the sweet baby her ladyship *got* last night. It is a monstrous little thing, I assure you*."

" But I hope it will thrive," said Mrs. Egerton, with true maternal feeling.

" Yes, that it will—indeed I think these vastly little children grow fastest."

" Profoundly remarked!" said Mr. Knowlesdon.

" I *got*

* Miss Patty's economy in making one verb serve the turn of so many, is truly laudable, and can only be excelled by those who make one word suffice for several.

"I *got* a terrible fall though, just as I *got* into the park—it was so immensely slippery, from the *hard* rain last night."

"I hope you *got* no hurt when you *got* your fall?" said the solicitor dryly.

"Only *got* a little frightened, or so—for I *enjoy* such dreadful *bad* health."

"That is more than some people do good health," interposed the solicitor.

Miss Patty, charmed with his gracious approval, more gaily continued—"I only *got* a blow from the stump of a tree."

"Oh ho!—then you *got* something after all," murmured the unmerciful solicitor; but, in louder tones, added—"I wonder, after such sufferings, how you *got* here."

"It is almost a miracle indeed," replied the gratified Miss Patty; "but I *got* on better than I could have suspected, considering the *hard* wind that blew right against me."

"Bless me!" cried Mr. Knowlesdon, in a grave commiserating tone, "you seem

to

to have been severely tried, what with the *hard* rain last night and the *hard* wind this morning*."

"I think I never saw such a storm."

"And did you see it now?" said Mr. Knowlesdon.

"See it!—yes, my dear sir, and I felt it too—But, I am sorry to say, I must go home soon, for I am expecting some friends to call upon me."

"Your expected friends are vastly obliged to you," said the solicitor.

The lady arose to depart, saying something of the lonesomeness of a solitary walk—a pathetic speech, which touched not the obdurate heart of the bachelor, and she was allowed to depart unattended.

As the solicitor raised his head from his parting bow, which, after such a flow of erudite

* Mr. Knowlesdon, and all such *ignoranti*, may laugh as much as they please at *hard* winds and *hard* rains—we contend that Miss Patty was scientifically correct; for are not water and air composed of incompressible particles, alias *hard* particles?—Oh, the triumph of philosophy!

erudite eloquence, had been more than usually profound, he gravely addressed Mrs. Egerton—" My dear madam, do *get* up stairs, and *get* down your cloak, and *get* off your cap, and *get* on your bonnet, and let us *get* out, or you will *get* more callers, and we shall never *get* home, and the dinner will *get* spoiled, and my sister will *get* angry, and I shall *get* surly, and you will *get* sorrowful, and Egerton will *get*—into a passion."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Lot of a Chimney-Sweeper.

When the party *got* out, Mr. Knowlesdon requested his friends to hasten their steps, as he must keep a promise he had given to a poor man. Now the solicitor had a puritanical preciseness in faithfully fulfilling his word, even when playfully given—

even

even when given to the poor and impotent—even when the fulfilment caused considerable trouble and inconvenience; he called breaking a promise a breach of trust as well as a falsehood, and he contended that nobody ought to make one, without considering whether it could be kept, and without fully intending to keep it. Where he collected all these out-of-fashion notions we really cannot tell, but, we are sure, not in the intercourse of modish life.

"The poor man has a son very ill," said Mr. Knowlesdon; "lady Wronghead promised to provide for him yesterday, I therefore proposed to visit him to-day."

But compassionate lady Wronghead had not imbibed the same gothic notions as her formal brother-in-law; and when she said to the mother of the sufferer—"I will send you some broth to-day," she meant, she would send it *some* day. The poor mother, however, having often heard the rich lecture the poor on the wickedness of breaking an engagement—not sending

home

home caps to order, or gowns according to promise, judged the lecturers never so offended, and therefore confidently relied on the promise of one who, she knew, could keep it as easily as she could make it. In the firm expectation of the promised bounty, she had omitted to provide for her sick child the humble nourishment her scanty means afforded. Hour passed after hour—every step was listened to with aching attention—every sound was welcomed with throbbing hope; the murmurs of the sufferer were hushed by the cheering description of the nice things the lady would send him—in this hope he silently bore his pains—in this hope his anxious mother patiently wiped from his cold brow the gathering dew. Nature was sinking fast.—"But it will come—the promised succour. Hush, Willy—hush, my child, a little longer."

She stepped to the door: the day had passed in sickening disappointment, and the dark stormy night seemed to cut off

all

all further hope. The cottage stood on the edge of a wide common; afar off appeared the Hall, glittering with lights: there revelled lady Wronghead, in the midst of health, wealth, and felicity. The gale that rushed innoxious over the splendid roof, swept chilly round the exposed form of the anxious mother, and the rain mingled with her streaming tears—tears embittered by disappointed hope. Oh, ye benevolent! ye prosperous! bethink you, that "hope deferred maketh sick the heart;" add not gall to the bitter cup of adversity, by raising expectations that cannot or will not be fulfilled; let not the patron cheer his mourning dependent with expectations, whose frustration will only more deeply depress him! let not the beneficent gladden the pennyless with promises, whose non-fulfilment will but add another sting to poverty!

The father of the child, a chimney-sweeper, at this moment appeared at the cottage-door. After a long day's labour in a distant

a distant village, he was returned—cold, wet, and hungry—panting for warmth, food, and repose; but Nature asserted her rights over his affections, and every selfish feeling was absorbed in the powerful claims of parental love—he hastened to the Hall, to implore assistance.

Lady Wronghead was taking coffee by a brilliant fire, which the damp weather rendered most desirable.

"The poor chimney-sweeper's father, my lady, come for some broth you promised," said the footman.

"Ay, true—desire Sanders to send some to-morrow."

"He begs hard for something to-night, my lady."

"Impertinent!" cried Miss Muddleton —"to what a pitch the poor have arrived, thus presuming upon kindness!"

"The boy is very ill indeed, my lady," continued the footman in a pitying tone, that seemed to argue, a livery may sometimes hide a feeling breast.

Lady

Lady Wronghead had powerfully felt the claims of the sufferer, when she hung over his wasted form in the damp hovel; but she was seated in a cheerful room, the scene was no longer before her, and its interest had faded away.—"I will send something to-morrow," said the lady, in a petulant tone; and whilst conscious of yielding to her ill-humour, was perfectly satisfied with her charity. The man withdrew.

The wretched father heard, with blanched cheek, the terrible sentence: without immediate help, the morrow would not behold his child alive. The footman, touched by his sufferings, at the risk of losing his place, gave him a slice of bread and a pitcher of beer.—Tell us, ye notable housewives, was this a crime beyond forgiveness?

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to describe the consternation of the wretched mother on beholding her husband return without the promised succour—even Miss Patty would have admitted the reasonableness of complaint under such a dis-

 appointment.

appointment. But the afflicted woman did not complain: inured to sorrow and accustomed to trial, she sought to soften its sting by exertion—not, as the children of opulence, to barb it by supine regrets. But the best food the cottage afforded was bread—the only beverage, water: the first, the exhausted stomach of the sick boy would not receive—the last barely sustained him from fatal swoonings.

At this moment the sounds of horsemen were heard on the road, and loud voices demanded a light—it was sir Gabriel and his sons returning from a dinner-party. The chimney-sweeper hastened to their aid—expended his last candle in lighting them into his cottage—consumed his last faggot in drying and warming the travellers. The violence of the storm passed over, and the trio departed, deeming the cottagers well paid for their trouble by the gift of a shilling. To have been denied entrance, to have been denied light and fire, were the last events that even the

the considerate sir Gabriel could have anticipated—such a denial would have been a crime never to have been forgotten, never to have been forgiven—would have served for the text to Miss Muddleton's "preachments" on the ingratitude of the poor, as long as she had lived. Yet why are the poor to bestow aid as a *duty*, and the rich to confer assistance as a *bounty*?

Jack, little disturbed about his wet jacket and his chilled fingers, had time to mark the haggard countenance of his host, and following him into a small inner apartment, discovered the cause of his misery—beheld the mother weeping over her expiring child. In two moments he was on his horse, and in almost as few seconds in the drawing-room of Random Hall.

Sir Gabriel and his heir, accustomed to his aberrations, asked no questions, but followed him at their leisure. On their entrance into the presence of lady Wrong-head, they found Jack already there, earnestly imploring for succour for the dying

child. His mother called his statement an exaggerated one, and, vexed at the recurrence of what she denominated a plague, peremptorily commanded his silence. Jack was stubborn, and would not be pacified by a promise of aid to-morrow—"He will die to-night, madam."

Lady Wronghead could almost have exclaimed—"Let him die!" but she magnanimously held her tongue, and only *thought* it.

"Why not send some trifle to-night, my dear?" said sir Gabriel.

"At this time of night! and such a night, sir Gabriel!"

"Would these objections keep you from a ball, madam?" exclaimed Jack, vehemently.

"The coachman can go for you, my dear."

"And be wet to the skin for nothing, sir Gabriel!"

"Heavens, madam! would you not order him out to drive you to a rout?"

The

The lady, driven from every subterfuge, lost her temper with her argument, and took shelter from reasoning, in assertion—the gentlemen will tell us, no uncommon resource of female logicians.—" It shall not be done, sir!"

The tone, the air with which this speech was given, would have daunted a less hardy pleader, but Jack was bold in the cause of pity, and returned to the charge.—" Mother, I will go myself."

His mother was sullen, and would not answer. Jack was in despair—he appealed to his father. Sir Gabriel's heart had not its seasons of hot and cold—with him it was always summer, warm and glowing. —" I have no broth for you, Jack, and money would be useless."

" Then, sir, order me the key of your cellar."

The order was given, and Jack made the butler produce a pint bottle of his best madeira.

" Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Miss

Patty, lifting up her hands and eyes to heaven—" goodness gracious!"

Jack, enjoying the consternation of butler and aunt (for well might they be surprised), flew off to the cottage. The cordial arrived just in time to recall the fluttering spirits of the expiring child. Jack knelt down, and sustaining his almost senseless body in his arm, moistened his lips with the reviving wine. The wretched apartment was lighted by a single flickering candle; poverty and sordid misery were depicted on every face, on every object. Adam Wronghead, Esq. was stretched on a splendid sofa, in a magnificent apartment; glittering chandeliers shed a brilliant radiance over his richly-attired figure; every countenance, every object around him, spoke magnificence and prosperity—yet on which youth fell the eye of Heaven with most approving glance?

The child revived, and yielded to the embraces of his transported parents. Jack trudged home: he moved along with rapid

pid strides, insensible to the splashing mud, the chilling rain, the blustering storm—his glowing heart, like the flame of a lamp, kept all warm within, however bleak the gale that blew without. He found the domestic circle as he had left it, dissolved in luxurious ease; but the bespattered Jack envied them not their inactive selfishness—no, though his best coat was streaming with water, his best hat irretrievably spoiled, and his best inexpressibles inexpressibly damaged.

When Mr. Knowlesdon and the Egertons entered the cottage the next morning, they found the invalid, though much refreshed and strengthened by the wine, feeble, emaciated, and suffering. The boy was an assistant to his father, and by a fall down a chimney, had received a severe contusion: besides this dreadful bruise, his body was tortured by a cutaneous disease, equally painful and disgusting. Mrs. Egerton shuddered as she approached the

poor sufferer.—"What has caused this afflicting eruption?"

"Alas, madam! the doctors call this the chimney-sweepers' cancer, and they say it comes of the soot that enters the skin."

"And how happened this dreadful accident?" inquired Mr. Knowlesdon.

The father replied by lamenting that such accidents will sometimes happen, in spite of every thing that can be done to prevent their occurrence—"Climbing-boys are sure to get bad falls and bad hurts, do what we will, sir."

"I do what I can to keep Willy clean," said the poor woman—"but indeed, my lady, in such a trade as this, it is a thing impossible."

Mrs. Egerton sighed.

The child, bruised and lacerated by his fall, and nearly covered with a loathsome scab, lay tortured by the pain of his wounds and the intolerable irritation of his eruptions.

If

If such the miserable state of a chimney-sweeper's boy, under the protection of tender parents, solicitous to preserve him from every possible evil, can our readers form any idea of the supreme wretchedness of those hapless little beings who follow this trying avocation under stranger masters, and, worse than all, under harsh masters—who daily risk falls, bruises, and suffocation, superadded to the sufferings of tyrannical oppression and severe chastisement? If such the *inevitable* and *unavoidable* diseases and disasters to which these forlorn children are exposed, can thought picture the state of those who, with disease and disaster, have to sustain blows, stinted food, scanty clothing, and every deprivation and every cruelty brutish violence can inflict—who are dragged from their straw pallets at the chilly hour of dawn, when even manhood shivers—who are compelled to labours beyond their strength, by means at which humanity recoils—who pursue a trade which appals the stoutest

heart? If, with sickening horror—if, with oppressive emotion, the bare description of this fate is contemplated—if the hand trembles with pitying anguish as it records the fact—if the eye overflows with bitter tears as it peruses the heart-rending detail—what agony must a view of the real suffering cause! with what pangs must the real sufferer groan!

Oh for the voice of an angel to awaken the sleeping humanity! oh for the inspiration of a deity to arouse the slumbering invention of man!—Then no longer should cruelty, disease, and death, await the poor, lacerated, trembling, little chimney-sweeper!

CHAP.

Note.—Since the above paragraph was written, we have heard, with the most heartfelt joy, that this interesting subject has been brought before the consideration of the legislature, and that it is likely very shortly to interfere, by passing an act for prohibiting the use of climbing-boys, other methods of cleaning chimnies having been discovered *perfectly efficient*. Most grateful must be the emotions of the

CHAPTER IX.

The Art of Pleasing, and of being pleased, explained for the Use, and adapted for the Attainment of the meanest Capacities; with a Touch at Fashion.

FROM the poor chimney-sweeper's the party proceeded to Mrs. Barbara Maude's.—Now, though this poor old maiden had neither much wit nor much wisdom, her society was always acceptable to those who

the first mover of this benevolent regulation; but until his wishes shall have received the sanction of law, the humanely disposed may begin the good work, by employing those chimney-sweepers who clean chimnies without the aid of boys. Such chimney-sweepers are to be found in various parts of London, and they cannot be too much encouraged. Having this choice before them, no person possessing any feeling will persist in allowing the attendance of climbing-boys.

who had both; even such as were grave from ennui, or melancholy from misfortune, found gratification and consolation in an hour's chat with the cheerful and resigned cripple. Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon used to say, that the calm gaiety of the old lady was a refreshment to her spirits, whenever they flagged beneath the pressure of anxiety; and Mrs. Egerton often declared, that she always found herself more at peace with the world, after having listened to the candid and benevolent sentiments of Mrs. Barbara. Yet she never spoke on fashionable topics—cards and scandal, modes and politics; she neither discoursed on modern learning nor on ancient wisdom; the name of Cowper was as little known to her as that of Cicero, and she was as much unacquainted with the revolutions of modern France as she was with the victories of Charlemagne, or the downfal of Carthage. What then did she talk about? That ought not to be a question of difficult solution, for she talked

upon

upon many subjects—that she understood nothing of any, you know, gentle reader, was no reason why she should not speak upon all; but the all of Mrs. Maude did not comprise the all of other talkers—history, politics, poetry, philosophy, satire, quadrille, the world.—Who are "*the world?*" *These people*—Messrs. Jacksons, Smiths, Wilkins, Jenkins, mesdames Clacks and Clacksons.

It was the manner, not the matter of Mrs. Barbara's discourses that possessed the aforesaid charm to please—the inveterate incurable habit of looking always on the most cheerful side of events, on the most amiable points of characters—this was the whole secret of the maiden's winning eloquence. Talk of the weather, she never failed to remember the past sunshine rather than the past gloom—to anticipate calms and not storms: a passing shower, or pending tempest, was certain to make her remark, that fine weather always followed foul, and that to-morrow's

serenity

serenity and beauty would overpay the roughness and cloudiness of to-day. Two days after the twenty-first of December, she began her dissertation on the charm of lengthening days, and with the first snow-drop commenced her gay anticipations of the approaching spring. She welcomed a boisterous gale, because it would certainly dissipate all unwholesome air; and she bore the summer-heat with more than patience—with delight, because it would deliciously flavour the fruit and ripen the corn.

Were the frailties of her acquaintance the theme of conversation, she was sure on the instant to recollect their merits, and as sure to make these latter outweigh the former. Was she told of the ill-natured observations passed on her own defects, she immediately set some remembered kindness against the satire, or acknowledged its justice: in either case, she escaped the sensations of anger and vexation.

Her

Her store of maxims was vast and curious: we need only to record one or two, to prove Mrs. Maude was no courtier. As specimens, take the following:—"Never forget a benefit received, and never remember a benefit bestowed."—"Never associate with the vicious, however splendid their rank or extensive their wealth." This last odd axiom she carried so far, that she would not employ the most fashionable tradesman, if that tradesman's character was tainted by crime, nor hire the most skilful cook, if her adroitness was remarkable at the price of her morality. Many people laughed at the old maiden for these whimsical regulations—"What signifies the example of an individual?"—"That individual, too, poor and powerless, you might have added," would the good woman reply—"but as society is made up of individuals, the example of even one may assist to uphold the cause of virtue, and to depress the arrogance of vice."

Of

Of her more serious maxims we will select but one, but that one was the keystone of her little code of piety, of her cheerful resignation—" In yielding ourselves to events, we feel ourselves in the hands of Providence: in opposing them, we throw ourselves into our own."

This propensity to blunt the thorns that strew the path of life, and extract the sweets from all its flowers, accompanied her every hour, and in every act. If she took a short walk into the village, or across the heath, she encountered more agreeable events, and beheld more pleasing objects, than Smellfungus would have discovered in a voyage round the world; and half an hour's chat with her after one of these little excursions was as enlivening as a fairy tale: she had met with so much goodness—she had experienced so much kindness—she had witnessed so much beauty and so much novelty! flowers bloomed fair and breathed sweet, in unprecedented perfection; the verdure of fields

and

and trees was never before so lovely—the lambs sported on purpose to please her, and the birds warbled with unwonted melody—one neighbour had been so courteous to her, another so attentive! she had been cheered with the view of a happy and united family, or informed by the conversation of some intelligent individual—she had learned resignation from the patient, or moderation from the prosperous; even if some mischance attended the expedition, she was so absorbed in delightful gratitude that the evil was no greater, or the succour so unexpected, that she had no time to waste in lamentations on the irrevocable disaster.

In seasons of sickness and in hours of sorrow, she was not without her comforts: her own ailments, her selfish griefs, were never known—she kept them, like the devotion that solaced them, sacred to herself; but, in the chamber of an invalid friend, she moved about with such a cheerful alacrity, such a noiseless but judicious

assiduity,

assiduity, that comforts sprung up beneath her hands, as flowers rising amid the joyless waste.

She was a great talker, but she was also a good listener; and though she would patiently attend to the longest detail of another's woe, she never dreamt of intruding her own into her conversation: every thing relating to herself she deemed insignificant, and unworthy attention—every thing relating to others she considered as worthy notice and sympathy.

Mr. Knowlesdon often stepped in to warm himself, both in body and in heart, as he expressed it, by the humble fire of Mrs. Barbara, in preference to the more splendid hearths of his wealthier friends; for there he met a smiling face as well as a blazing faggot—there he beheld gay content, cheerful industry, and unvacillating hospitality—no change of reception, no uncertain welcome—he was as sure of the ready hand as of the ready chair, and would as soon have feared caprice in his hostess

as

as chilliness in her fire: both were governed by the same principles of nature—unartificial and unerring.

We hope we shall be forgiven for having prattled so long on a character of such humble pretensions, but we have been unconsciously beguiled into a lengthened detail; if we have equally beguiled our readers, we shall not be required to apologize—if we have not equally interested them, all apology were vain.

The party found Miss Muddleton at her cousin's, not "on charitable thoughts intent," but come there to meet a certain fashionable milliner, who, once a-year, deigned to illuminate the villagers with the residue-finery of the county-town. It was curious to observe the strong contrast between the two cousins: as certainly as Mrs. Barbara pointed out sunshine in the east, Miss Patty discovered a cloud in the west—whatever remark Miss Patty preluded with a sigh, Mrs. Barbara closed with a smile.

The

The visit paid, the party proceeded towards Woodleigh Manor, and Mr. Knowlesdon kept up, with much spirit, the discourse on ton and taste begun by Miss Muddleton. He concluded a few *piquante* remarks on the uncovering rage of modern belles, by wondering what would be next unveiled. The solicitor looked profoundly thoughtful, as he said—"Indeed it is difficult to determine, in this age of discovery, what we may not live to see."

"The ladies," replied Mr. Egerton, "are only paraphrasing the beautiful line of the poet—'Unadorned—adorned the most:' as thus—'When most undressed—full-dressed the most."

Mrs. Egerton advocated the cause of her sex; but, wisely rejecting the inapplicable aid of reason and propriety, called in wit and humour to her support.

Mr. Egerton protested against this illogical mode of proceeding, and Mr. Knowlesdon gallantly conceded the argument to his fair opponent, adding, however, that he believed

believed any folly sanctioned by fashion would soon have followers.—"I presume not to encroach on the mysteries of feminine costume," said the wary lawyer, "but I will prove my assertion by an experiment on my own sex. There is that precious coxcomb, my nephew Timotheus—he shall make himself a greater fool than even dame Nature and his own worthy mamma have already made him."

The conversation was changed, and the threat forgotten. In the evening, the family of the Wrongheads joined the social circle. Mr. Knowlesdon was absent at their entrance, but, in a few moments after, suddenly appeared, dressed in a rich waistcoat, the pockets of which he had had cut off, so that, when his hands were put into them, his fingers were seen playing below. The circle were amazed—Timotheus, agitated by surprise and envy, had scarcely voice to ask a question.

Mr. Knowlesdon calmly answered the breathless

breathless interrogatory of his nephew.—"The waistcoat was of the latest invention—the falsetto."

Adam Wronghead, Esq. gazed in silent awe.

"What the devil is the use of such a fashion?" exclaimed sir Gabriel.

"Use of a fashion!" said Mr. Knowlesdon, with an air of scorn.

"Use of a fashion!" repeated Miss Patty Muddleton, with a simpering sneer.

"Use!" cried Jack—"I see the use of this presently—it is to shew that smart folks have no use for any thing."

"Ay, ay, Jack—you are right," replied sir Gabriel, laughing most unmanneredly—"From what I know of smart folks," rudely glancing his eye on young Hopeful, his heir, "it is not often they know even how to use money."

"Jack's solution must be tolerably near the mark," said Mr. Knowlesdon very gravely: "people of ton cannot better display

display their utter helplessness, and utter idleness, than by this unequivocal exhibition of empty pockets."

"La, uncle! this is the most ridiculous of all ridiculous fashions," said Miss Wronghead.

"More ridiculous than coats without laps—wigs, in preference to natural hair—bolstered neckcloths, stiff as buckram—and plaited boots?" exclaimed the solicitor.

"Then, my dear sir," observed Miss Patty, with one of her sweetest smiles, "it seems your sex is more whimsical than ours."

"Pardon me, madam, if I presume to differ from you," answered the solicitor, with much respectful deference. "I touch the subject with a trembling hand—but surely the fairest and loveliest part of the creation are not without some few whims."

The soft tones of the solicitor touched the yielding maiden's heart, and she breathed one soft, one gentle sigh.

The rude voice of Jack disturbed the tender

tender and responsive eloquence of looks and tones—"A few whims!—a myriad. —What think you, ma'am, of gowns without sleeves—winter raiment without petticoats—trains now five yards long, and now wanting a foot to cover the ancles—humps on the back, like dromedaries—waists sometimes as long as my arm, sometimes as short as my finger?" Jack would probably have continued vociferating for an hour, if a chorus of female voices had not outsounded his philippic on the fairest and loveliest part of the creation.

Mr. Knowlesdon had carefully provided for the dissemination of the new fashion, by commanding his servant, on pain of his never-ending displeasure, to conceal *the* waistcoat from every human eye. The consequence was natural—every eye in the parish had gazed upon it before noon next day; and at the village-ball, the following week, every beau in the room walked about, with his fingers peeping through the fringed edges of his waistcoat,

coat, the cunning lawyer having added the embellishment of a rich fringe, to render his invention irresistible.

Adam Wronghead, Esq. transported with importing such a novelty into the county-town, attended the next assize-ball in all the glory of his new attire, exhibiting himself to the joyous group, who were humanely indulging in dance and song, within earshot of the condemned malefactor, the dungeoned prisoner, and the trembling culprit. Oh, glorious system, worthy a feeling and enlightened nation, to select that period for mirth and jollity, balls, concerts, and plays, when hundreds of wretched beings are agonized with suspense—anticipating captivity, banishment, death!

Mr. Knowlesdon and Jack accompanied Timotheus, expecting to enjoy a glorious hoax, by his disgrace; but the good sense and candour of the assembly prevented the fulfilment of their malicious hopes. Adam Wronghead, Esq. was pronounced

the pink of beaux — more captivating and unique than ever. Happy the belle that was handed out by the fringe-veiled hand!—happy the beau whose valet caught a describable glimpse of the non-descript waistcoat! but, above all, supremely happy the tailor who could next morning give a peep of the identical *morceau* of taste!

It was instantly debated how the ladies could introduce this modish improvement into their dress. A large party met on the momentous affair, when — oh fatal deathblow to every scheme! it was found that no lady in the circle had any pockets at all. What could be done? Nothing remained but to cut off the bottoms of the ridicules, and in lieu attach the indispensable fringe. The article was now much more complete, for what on earth could be more ridiculous?

After all that could be done, the ladies deemed it very provoking they could not nearer imitate this admirable invention; but, alas! on the most accurate inspection, it

it was found no further curtailments could be made in feminine attire—the fair sex had arrived at the "*ne plus ultra*" of admittable nudityfication—may we be excused for coining this word? Really modish costume, as well as modish manners, and all that is modish, seem to demand a modish vocabulary. What would our grandfathers and grandmothers call half the things that are said and done and worn in these enlightened days?

May we be also excused for presuming to set any bounds to modern ingenuity? for, as Mr. Knowlesdon wisely remarked, "In this age of discovery, what may we not live to see!"

CHAPTER X.

Hypercriticism.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon's ire was one day so profoundly roused against her brother, that it had the same effect upon her as love had upon her niece—it inspired her to jingle rhymes. The solicitor had thought proper, on a preceding evening, to devote his attention exclusively to the pretty but giddy Mrs. Mansel, whilst Mrs. Barbara Maude—the amiable but unlovely Mrs. Barbara Maude, sat by, unnoticed and unaddressed. He had, moreover, many times talked slightingly of "ugly women," and enthusiastically of "pretty girls." Mrs. Mary, in the fury of her wrath, addressed the following lines to him, which, considering that they were written by a woman —considering that they were composed on the spur of the moment—and considering half-

half-a-dozen other extenuating considerations, were really not so very bad as might have been expected:

THE DEFENCE OF PLAIN WOMEN,

BY ONE NEITHER PLAIN NOR PRETTY.

BEAUTY! thou darling theme of manly praise!
  Shall wisdom, with its hoary head,
Make thee the subject of its brighest lays,
  E'en when thy lineaments are shed
O'er folly's child, and celebrate
  Thy charms, though veil'd below
Lie rankling pride, and envious hate,
  And raging anger's fever'd glow?

Beneath thy guise oft artful maids
  Their follies cunningly enshroud;
While the plain nymph, in virtue blest,
Meets, with bent eye and fluttering breast,
  The stare contemptuous of the thoughtless crowd,
And early sinks to dull oblivion's shades.

Can this be just? ye sons of wisdom, say;
  Should form and face alone ensnare?
Should beauty's frail, though bright array,
  Alone attract a lover's prayer?

Ah! mark yon modest, blushing fair,
By nature unadorn'd, plain, artless, mild,
Chaste virtue's dear and favourite child,
Though beauty's lowest votary:
What though no auburn tints her flowing hair—
What though no radiance sparkles in her eye—
What though no roses blush upon her cheek,
Nor her full lips the cherry's hue bespeak—
Sure the luxuriance of her careless locks
The studied tresses of the beauty mocks—
It marks her better mind,
To trifles disinclin'd:
Heedless of Fashion's call,
And careless of her sway,
Dares thus attend a ball
In unadorn'd array.

See, in her eye dissolves the trembling tear,
And wandering thence, destroys no borrow'd bloom;
She weeps at woes the poor and wretched bear,
Nor fears to dim her lustre by a gloom.

Yet, shaded thus by feeling's tender woe,
Does no attractive gentleness of thought
O'er her soft sorrowing features throw
A nameless charm, with genuine pity fraught?

Does

Does not the faded languor of her cheeks
Add forceful interest to her low-heav'd sigh?
Does not the language that her silence speaks
More eloquently paint her sorrowing eye?

Alone, unheeded, see, she gives her mite:
No bursting plaudits celebrate the deed—
Her arm *ungraceful* meets the gazer's sight,
And cancels thus her claim to virtue's meed.

But should a barren sigh of wearied apathy
Steal from the beauty's cold and selfish breast,
The crowd, enchanted, laud her sympathy,
And deem the sufferer's keenest pangs redrest.

Oh, man! proud man! is this thy boasted sense—
This the discriminating fiat of thy voice?
A reign of juster taste commence,
And wiser make thy future choice.

Give beauty praise—it is her rightful due;
With virtue join'd, she claims a boundless sway;
But let ungraceful merit too,
Claim and receive a tributary lay.

"Vastly fine, indeed, sister Mary! vastly fine!" said the solicitor, with a mixture of

sarcasm and good-humour. "But why 'hoary head?' can wisdom only be found under grey hairs?" continued he, throwing back a dark lock that intruded on his forehead. "And pray what do you mean to call this precious composition? Not an ode, certainly, for neither the sentiment nor the versification is adapted to musical accompaniment—a cadenza would sound most horrible on that same 'hoary." This luckless word greatly annoyed the solicitor; but he continued his strictures—"I hope you do not mean to insinuate that beauty of face and form always accompanies deformity of heart and mind?"

Mrs. Mary pointed to her closing stanza.

"Ay, ay, to be sure that is a little explanatory. Nor, I suppose, do you mean to infer, that ungracefulness of stature, or unloveliness of feature, are invariably indicative of mental sagacity and amiable dispositions?"

Mrs. Mary smiled a calm dissent; her brother proceeded—"The language of silence!

lence! a grand idea, of course, for it is a flat contradiction of terms—'language,' in the vulgar acceptation of that word, generally meaning, to speak; and 'silence,' as generally implying, not to speak. You will tell me, it is only a poetical licence; and I will tell you, if you can render your assertion tenable, you will confer an incalculable favour on society, and secure no small share of renown; for since ladies must have language, what a glorious discovery to teach them a *silent* language!"

Mrs. Mary at this moment gave the satirist a look so full of expression, so sweet, yet so eloquent, that to avoid an instant acknowledgment of the propriety of her phrase, he rapidly pursued his remarks—"But should a barren sigh of wearied apathy'—Good, sister Mary, very good—happily expressive of the dull lingering sentiment it would describe."

"Admirable critic!" exclaimed Mrs. Mary; "only one approving sentence amid

a volume of censure! you have executed your duty most scientifically."

"Perhaps you think more honestly than politely?"

"No, not so—I consider your candour as a compliment to my good sense. Had you deemed me very, very weak, you would perhaps have soothed my vanity at the expence of my understanding. Now, therefore, frankly conclude, as you frankly began, your revision of my poem."

"We will call it verse, if you please—it is not poetry," replied Mr. Knowlesdon.

His sister smiled in perfect good-humour.

The solicitor, touched by the smile, and by the air of unaffected humility that accompanied it, instantly dropped his dictatorial tone, and mildly said—"I would much prefer revising your conduct under my recent criticism. Your patience, your good temper, trust me, my dear Mary, are more valuable than the most exquisite poetry."

"How is this?" answered Mrs. Mary.

"Do

"Do you desert the advocation of genius?"

"Pardon me, I am a great admirer of genius, but I am a greater lover of virtue. I gaze with delight upon the comet that brightly and transiently gleams in the firmament; but I gaze with reverence, with gratitude, on the steady and equable sunbeam, that perpetually warms and enlightens."

Mr. Knowlesdon spoke with feeling; Mrs. Mary gaily answered—"Well, well, happily I never made any pretensions to genius; and as for your criticism, I very truly thank you for it—it was kindly meant, and shall be kindly received."

She then playfully repeated from Sterne —"I would go fifty miles on foot to kiss the hand of that man, whose generous heart will give up the reins of his imagination into his author's hands—be pleased he knows not why, and cares not wherefore."

CHAPTER XI.

Well order'd home!—man's best delight. THOMSON.

WE have to entreat the pardon of our readers for the many poor hovels and lowly cottages into which we have led them, and the number of low-born and low-bred persons to whom we have introduced them. We feel particularly happy in being able at length to make the *amende honorable*, by carrying them into a splendid mansion, and making them acquainted with very genteel and very refined people. If less happiness and less virtue appear in these wealthy abodes, we really cannot help it; we really cannot prevent mortals from abusing and misusing the good gifts of prosperity, any more than we can prevent content existing amidst poverty, and virtue flourishing beneath vulgarity.

Mr.

Mr. Egerton about this time received a pressing invitation from an old college-friend, to visit him at his house in the adjoining county. Mr. Egerton was very well disposed to obey the summons, and Mrs. Egerton was equally inclined to see him depart. There are so many reasons why a wife should desire the absence of a husband, that we leave it to the sagacity of our readers to ascribe the motive each may think most likely, thereby assuring to ourselves the approval of all.

Mrs. Knowlesdon said something about the disinterested affection which prompted Helena to prefer her husband's pleasure to her own; but how should an old maid know any thing of wifely feelings? A few of them do, to be sure, sometimes talk about them. Certainly, when we come to recollect, that by the departure of Mr. Egerton and his man Philip, with the only pair of horses kept at the Abbey, the wetness of the season, the badness of the roads, half-a-dozen infant children at home,

and

and no friends expected from abroad (Mrs. Mary being close prisoner to her invalid, and the solicitor on the circuit), we are fain to confess there was some plausibility in the spinster's opinion. If, therefore, any such antediluvian mortal as a fondly-attached wife and tender mother should honour these pages by a perusal, we give them leave to suppose Mrs. Egerton acted from the same motives as would have guided themselves—that she voluntarily resigned herself to solitude, voluntarily deprived herself of the society most dear to her, to promote the comfort and gaiety of the man she had sworn to love, honour, and obey.

Mr. Egerton, after a pleasant journey, arrived in safety at the noble mansion of his friend. Eustace Courtney received him with the warmest cordiality. He was alone, in a magnificent library, and Montague observed, with painful surprise, an unusual expression of dejection and discontent on a countenance heretofore remarkable

markable for its manly beauty and peculiar air of sprightliness; it was still handsome, but, alas! no longer sprightly.

Somewhat initiated in the causes of a married man's disquiet, Montague asked with fearfulness for the health of his friend's wife and family? They were in perfect health. Mr. Egerton was at the end of his list of matrimonial evils. Perhaps some of our Benedick readers will think he had not begun it—will mutter strange nonsense about the uncertain temper of women, the petulance of wives, and the turbulence of children. Hush! discourteous knights! if there are such evils (which we by no means allow), pray keep the secrets to yourselves.

The traveller, after some further chat, retired to the splendid apartment prepared for his reception. Here Philip assiduously assisted him to the comforts of a change of apparel, and a refreshing lustration. Eager to renew the conversation, Montague quickly rejoined his friend in the library.

His

His fair hostess was still invisible. Mr. Egerton's thoughts flew back to the Abbey —he imaged his Helena nursing her infant, and giving her last moments to the pleasing duties of a mother.—"Even so must Mrs. Courtney be occupied."

In thinking thus, Montague had forgotten the etiquette of fashionable nurseries, from whence the children never appear before their parents till the appointed hour after dinner; and then, if they happen to dine at home, and dine alone (the chances for which the reader may calculate), the little mortals are affectionately admitted for half-an-hour. Do country mammas ask at what period they are summoned or visited on those days appropriated to going out or seeing company at home? we are ready with our answer—they are not seen at all. We record facts, for we have heard a nurse boast of the confidence reposed in her by her last mistress, who *often* passed a week without beholding one of five very young children. Indeed, when we come to consider

sider the trouble and inconvenience of entering a distant disorderly nursery, the probable mischiefs occasioned by thoughtless babies, with clinging arms deranging a neck frill, or kissing a curl from its destined place—climbing upon a satin robe, or ruffling a plaited flounce—when we reflect on all these evils, with the little leisure dress, balls, plays, routs, and races, leave for *secondary* claims, we conceive the infrequency of maternal visits perfectly excusable. Little harm can occur from such neglect—except, indeed, the probable loss of the poor children's affections, the chance of their being ill-used by mercenary hirelings, of their acquiring vicious habits and vicious sentiments, can be called disagreeable circumstances.

The first dinner-bell rung. Mr. Egerton looked as if in expectation of the instant arrival of Mrs. Courtney, for Helena never failed in punctuality. We greatly blame the gentleman for his idle trick of perpetually drawing comparisons: why

should

should Mrs. Courtney be every thing that is most amiable, because Mrs. Egerton happened to be so? One party is sure to suffer by such comparisons; the consequences are, therefore, generally embarrassing, and we would recommend an avoidance of the practice. We have made this short digression on purpose to fill up the pause between the first and second dinner-bell: Mr. Courtney did not seem disposed by lively chat to give us better matter for our page, and his friend had twice silently reviewed every painting on the walls.

The second dinner-bell—the dinner.

"I fear, Montague, you will be exhausted with your long fasting, but Mrs. Courtney has such a habit of procrastination——"

"Say not a word more, my friend—a little delay will but sharpen the edge of my appetite."

The irritated husband was proceeding into further censuring remarks, but Egerton

ton adroitly drew his attention to another subject.

"That fine print of the High Street in Oxford reminds me of past days," said Montague, with a smile.

"And me of past joys," answered Courtney, with a sigh. He rang the bell violently: the butler appeared—"Does your lady know that dinner is upon the table?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then let her be informed again."

The servant obeyed, and returned with an answer—his lady was coming.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes—Montague almost wished the magnificent horologe on the splendid chimneypiece would cease to move, so often did it catch the eye of the angry husband, and by its steady progression break the thread of his discourse.

Twenty, twenty-five, thirty minutes—the lady appeared. Montague gazed with admiration on her graceful form and lovely face. A bewitching smile played around her

her dimpling lips, as with a look and voice of ineffable sweetness she welcomed her guest.

"You have kept the dinner cooling on the table exactly three quarters of an hour, Mrs. Courtney."

Mrs. Courtney had sense enough to understand the rebuke, but not enough to bear it. She peevishly reprobated his impatience—he angrily censured her dilatoriness. Small sparks will blow into a flame when the materials are so well prepared for combustion. Egerton arrested further inflammation by handing the lady to the dining-room; but the smile and the grace were fled—ill-humour wrinkled the before-polished brow, and anger had chased the dimples from the full lips: Montague no longer thought her "beautiful as an angel, and winning as the graces."

As Mr. Courtney anticipated, the dinner was spoiled; the fish was cold, and the soup chilled—the chickens boiled to rags, and the venison roasted to a cinder. But

—nothing

—nothing could be more superb than the richly-embossed service of plate—the side-board groaned beneath the massy load of gold vases and silver goblets; nothing could be more dextrous than the several lacqueys—nothing more delicious than the numerous foreign wines and liqueurs.

Mr. Egerton did not look as if unused to magnificence—to magnificence conjoined with the highest comfort; but he looked as if, when one must be had without the other, he preferred comfort without pomp, to pomp without comfort.

Philip appeared more sorry for his master than his master was for himself, and sought by redoubled attention to give him every accommodation in his power—to give him, in short, some of the enjoyment he every day possessed at home—But the attempt was vain: Montague himself had again fallen into a comparing reverie—the snug little dinners at the Abbey—the smiling mistress of the feast; he was growing sentimental, and stopped the course of his ideas,

ideas, by abruptly asking Mrs. Courtney to take wine.

Philip gazed with mute but eloquent dismay at the glances darted and redarted from the top and the bottom of the table, and felt his respect for both rapidly diminishing; but his consternation was heightened, when he found the looks and speeches of madam and her lord were the favourite topic of daily ridicule and daily mimicry in the servants' hall.

The dinner was scarcely removed, scarcely was the luxurious dessert, served in superb cut-glass, placed on the table, when three fine children rushed into the room. Without looking at parent or friend, they sprung towards the table, and their eager eyes wandered over every delicacy.

"If you touch any thing, I shall certainly turn you out of the room that moment," said Mrs. Courtney, in a tone of gentle authority.

The little ones shewed their sense of her firmness, by each immediately seizing on the

the favourite cake or fruit. The syrup of sweetmeats ran through the fingers of a rosy girl, devouring a preserved peach; one boy was nearly choked by cramming a rich cake into his mouth, and the other stood on tiptoe to grasp the centre pine-apple.

The lady again exerted her judicious authority—"My sweet Augustus, do not bite that pine, it will hurt your mouth."

But sweet Augustus had been so often told, both by mother and nurse, that he would be hurt, cut, burnt, and poisoned, by things that upon trial neither hurt, cut, burnt, nor poisoned him, that without hesitation he bit the pine, wounded his lip, and roared most manfully.

Mr. Egerton, from the moment of the children's entrance, had spoken louder and louder, to outsound their turbulence, but he was now compelled to pause. Mrs. Courtney, with great sweetness, pacified the weeping boy, and with amiable maternal tenderness gave each darling all it asked for,

for, prettily remarking, that for her part, she alway preferred "gentle measures."

Montague applauded her "patience and mildness," the very observation Mrs. Courtney desired.

As every little mouth was now full or filling, Mr. Courtney and his friend profited by the calm, and pursued their chat. Mrs. Courtney was still smiling in all the gentleness of maternal tenderness, when her little girl, stooping at the command of her mother to pick up a fallen glove, struck mamma's nose with her head.

Now, whether the blow acted as the collision of some other bodies, by eliciting fire, we know not, but in a moment the mild beam of maternal fondness was displaced by the fiery glance of anger—a smart box on the ear of the unintentional offender was given by the delicate hand so lately patting the cheek in playful caress; and as all hope of pacification was now at an end, the lady retired with her roaring

roaring trio—one screaming from the blow received, and the others from the blow expected, as they seemed to have a notion, that when mamma once began boxing, she generally let the joke go round—in short, that they would be beaten because mamma *was angry*, not because they deserved to be beaten.

Let it not be supposed an uncommon event for children to reason thus: there is no doubt that they very early, and very shrewdly, examine and understand the motives of action in those around, most especially where themselves are implicated.

"But it is so difficult to manage children—to preserve the medium between indulgence and severity—to control, without crushing the buoyant spirit." We dearly love children—we are anxious, in every way, to promote, not abridge their felicity; but we must be allowed to say, they require control, and that it is *not* difficult to control them. We hate the very word severity—we abhor tasks, pu-

 nishments,

nishments, and coercion; we therefore presume to offer a substitute—to propose decision and firmness in lieu of violence and harshness, as the better means of nursery government.

Mrs. Courtney spontaneously denounced a certain penalty for a certain offence: the offence was committed, but the penalty unenforced: either it ought never to have been threatened, or it ought to have been adjudged. Now, we will ask any mother, whether, if Mrs. Courtney had acted on her own regulation—had dismissed from her presence the first offender, whether that offender would again have risked the forfeit of disobedience—whether her other children would not have benefited by the example—whether the after-scene of passion and turbulence would not have been avoided? It is better not to attempt controlling children, than to do it inefficiently. The prisoner who bursts his bands is more extravagant in his recovered freedom, than he who never felt a chain—the child

who

who eludes command is more turbulent than he who is wholly in his own government. Be the restrictions upon children few, but judicious, steadily enforced, unwavering as the laws of Media and Persia. Surely the tenderest mother would prefer one chastisement to many—would prefer the *trouble* of firmness to the pain of violence.

Mr. Courtney shut the door upon the receding group—" I have sought in vain," said he, as he returned to his chair, " to convince Mrs. Courtney, that a gentle and regular firmness would much better serve her purpose, than these bursts of indiscriminate rage."

" You must have patience, Eustace."

" Patience! I think I have just given you some proofs of my patience."

Mr. Courtney spoke with bitterness: his friend endeavoured to change the current of his thoughts—" Your wife is a very lovely woman."

" She has been."

"Nay, is still very lovely."

"I have ceased to think so."

"Her fine dark eyes——"

Mr. Courtney interrupted him—"With that charming expression of scorn and passion."

"A lovely forehead."

"Perpetually crimsoned with anger, or wrinkled with disdain."

"Her full lips, dimpling with smiles."

"Say rather, pouting with sullenness."

"Pshaw! my friend, why so busy to wound yourself? Why search for the thorns of the rose?"

"I need not seek for them: to you, however lovely the bloom, to me, who wear the flower, every touch wounds—every grace conceals a goad."

Mr. Egerton shifted his ground—"Mrs. Courtney appears to possess good temper."

"You mistake, she only possesses good-humour. May you never, like me, poignantly feel the distinction!"

"She is certainly a woman of sense."

"But

"But what does that avail, if she does not wisely use her sense?"

"Oh, she will, she will—she loves you, and will improve."

Mr. Courtney shook his head—"Alas! my dear Egerton, little improvement can be expected from one who thinks herself too wise to learn, and too good to amend."

CHAPTER XII.

The worth of a good Temper accurately defined.

Mr. Egerton now wholly abandoned the cause, for he had not the happy art, possessed by some persons, of reasoning against common-sense, and arguing against obvious facts: the friends now, therefore, yielded themselves, without reserve, to the retrospection of days long past—of their boyish hours and boyish frolics—of their youthful studies and youthful joys.

The evening passed away insensibly; they seemed, by mutual consent, to postpone a return into the drawing-room, as if afraid of inevitable disturbance from infant turbulence and wifely caprice.

At length they joined the lady, and found her sullen, from the absence herself had caused. We are not sure whether a conviction of this fact did not contribute to her frowning reception. May we, with all due deference, ask the pouting fair, whether evils are generally remedied by a repetition of their cause? But there is no saying how ladies sometimes *argue*—— applaud us, ye manly logicians, that we said not *reason*.

When coffee was dispatched—"Montague," said Mr. Courtney, "you are fond of music—Julia touches the harp with no vulgar finger." He drew the costly harp from its corner.

Mrs. Courtney, with the most polite air imaginable, immediately exclaimed—"I beg, Mr. Courtney, you will not give yourself

self so much unnecessary trouble—I shall not play to-night."

"Then give us that charming little ballad you sung so admirably last night at lord Hilton's."

He smiled kindly, and opened the grand piano-forte; but he was soon made to understand the difference between ladies obliging their acquaintance and their husbands. —"I cannot sing."

"Then, my love, play." He arranged the books, placed the lights, drew out the seat, and was officiously preparing for her accommodation.

Mrs. Courtney permitted the whole arrangement to be completed, and then, with the most finished good-breeding, calmly observed, she should not play.

Mr. Courtney coloured, frowned, bit his lips—the lady was all placidity and sweetness; she well admired the anger she had sought to inflame, and really enjoyed her husband's displeasure, as a token of her influence, and recked not, simple woman!

that anger, oft incurred, displaces love. She did not, however, equally relish the grave reproving air of Montague. Can any body explain, why there is joy in wounding the attached and confiding heart, but sorrow in offending the casual observer?

Mrs. Courtney hastened to remedy her error, and, with courteous elegance, addressed her guest; she spoke of feeling, sentiment, books, nature, and the fine arts. —"Your lady excels in music?"

"She sings with some taste, certainly."

"And plays frequently?"

"Assuredly—whenever her husband asks her," interposed Mr. Courtney.

The lady coloured; but it was the deep glow of anger, not the lovely blush of sensibility. She recovered herself in a moment—"She was educated at a school?"

"She was."

"And I was educated at home."

The reader may draw his own conclusions from this hint—how young ladies may be spoilt at home, and rationally educated

cated at a school. But it is not every school that is adapted to produce a Mrs. Egerton—artless and well-informed; it is not all private tuition that produces a Mrs. Courtney—vain and superficial.

The next morning, Mr. Courtney led his friend round his estate. It was very extensive, well wooded and well watered, but by no means in a state of high cultivation. Mr. Courtney himself pointed out how much ought to be done.

"And why, my friend, do you not effect all this?"

"Why do not I? Because all this would require money, and I am poor."

"Poor! with the princely fortune you possess?"

"That I *did* possess."

"Ah! have you been so extravagant?"

"Accuse me not prematurely, friend; it is not I have done the deed."

"Then who has done it?"

"No one. My property has not been exhausted by extravagance, but wasted by

carelessness; in every sense of the word, it has been *lost*."

"In what manner? You talk paradoxically."

"Can you not easily divine the evils entailed on a family governed by such a head as Mrs. Courtney? I do not accuse her of ignorance or wilful profusion, but her habits of indolence, procrastination, negligence, have incurred equal mischiefs."

"Is that possible?"

"It is most true."

"But how?"

"That I cannot precisely explain. I only know, that a large sum, accumulated in my minority, is all gone—that my estate in Bedfordshire is mortgaged to its full amount, and that just now I could not raise a thousand pounds to save me from a prison."

"Dear Courtney, there must be some mistake."

"None, my friend, none—all stubborn facts. Mrs. Courtney's indolence leads her

to

to trust every thing to servants; her procrastination obliges her to have frequent recourse to expensive and ruinous expedients; her negligence incurs not only waste and destruction of property, but exposes her to every species of fraud and imposition."

"But why not state to her the exact situation of your affairs?"

"I have done so—repeatedly done so; for I consider confidence as the great band of matrimonial happiness, and that the man who does not explain his real circumstances to his wife deserves every evil her ignorance may draw upon him."

"Well, surely she is alive to reason?"

Mr. Courtney laughed in the bitterness of his spirit—"Oh, Montague! I see you have not to combat with petulance, caprice, and obstinacy."

Mr. Egerton forbore further comment, and the friends returned to the house. Mrs. Courtney was expecting them in listless languor—"How long you have been

absent! I am quite *ennuyeuse*—three hours alone, and unemployed."

"Unemployed! You have explained the cause of your lassitude," replied her husband.

"Oh, I could not find any thing to do," said the lady, with an air of elegant languidness.

Montague cast his eyes around the richly-furnished apartment: books, musical instruments, painting apparatus, crayons, work-boxes, were profusely scattered in every part; her children, too—her garden, conservatory, carriages, horses—her household—the poor——But he arrested the train of thought, for he found it about to close, as usual, with the image of his Helena—Helena, ever active, occupied, cheerful. He approached the harp, and admired the elegance of its ornaments.

Mrs. Courtney sauntered towards him, and languidly placing herself before the instrument, threw her fingers over the chords. From a fine prelude, she fell into a beautiful

tiful little air, which she accompanied with her voice. Ballad succeeded to ballad; the lady displayed first-rate powers of voice and execution. A servant had entered more than once, and whispered some words in her ear, which she answered with a careless—"I will come." Again he appeared, but his master angrily bade him withdraw. The siren continued her enchantment, and lulled to peace the ire of her spouse and the displeasure of her guest. Morning visitors beguiled another hour.

As Mr. Courtney returned from leading these to their carriage, he encountered the housekeeper, with a face full of care.—"Pray, sir, let me see my lady—the butler tells me you expect company to-day."

"And have you had no orders?"

"No, sir—not a word."

Mr. Courtney darted into the room—"Julia! here, instantly."

The lady was surprised into prompt obedience.

We forbear to give the pretty little *matrimonial*

trimonial chit-chat that ensued in the hall; we forbear to describe how the gentleman remonstrated—how the lady retorted—how the housekeeper reflected: suffice it to say, that after a quarter-of-an-hour's inspiriting conversation, Mr. Courtney returned to his friend, with flushed cheeks and unharmonized nerves—"Montague, it is in vain to dissemble."

"What is the matter?"

"That woman!" He paused—"Mrs. Courtney."

"Nothing very important, I hope?"

"Not apparently important, but nevertheless most effectually destructive of my consequence, my fortune, my peace."

Mr. Courtney then briefly informed his guest that he expected a large party—had told his wife so many days before—"Yet she has actually postponed giving any orders until this moment. Judge, then, what sort of entertainment I must expect to preside at—judge of the feelings with which I am prepared to receive my guests."

Montague

Montague tried in vain to sooth the irritated spirits of his friend. The predicted scene of hurry and confusion was too faithfully realized: the hastened activity of every domestic, though put into instant requisition—the calling of many voices—the clattering of many feet—scolding cooks and embarrassed footmen—all conspired to produce a scene of indescribable confusion. Two hours later than the time specified, the company sat down to a dinner, ill contrived, ill cooked, and badly served: haste flurried every hand, and perplexity dimmed every eye. Expensive expedients supplied the place of timely preparation; a valuable horse was irremediably injured in galloping for fish; the larger half of a superb service of emblazoned china dashed to pieces in the hurry of the moment, and a valuable butler dismissed for an angry remonstrance produced by unjust displeasure: all was misery, in the midst of splendour.

Mr. Egerton sought, but unsuccessfully,

to

to beguile the attention of the guests from the palpable confusion of the scene—in vain he strove to reason Mr. Courtney into patience, or flatter Mrs. Courtney into gentleness; to her friends, indeed, she was all smiles and blandishments, but to her husband——

If there ever is such a person in the world as an angry and self-convicted wife, let her imagine the pithy speeches, the cutting glances, the probing double entendres, of the lady; if there ever is such a mortal as an offended half-bridled husband, let him conceive the abstracted reveries, the abrupt remarks, the pretty strictures on "conjugal felicity," of the gentleman—the one and the other so largely contributing to the amusement and comfortable sensations of their invited and observant guests.

Mr. Egerton retired to his chamber, more harassed and fatigued than after the longest day of mere bodily exertion.

The next day was opened by a glorious morning,

morning, spent by the friends in such happy rides, rambles, and conversations, that Mr. Courtney, at the dinner-hour, was wound up into the most harmonious good-humour. But his lady kindly "let down the pegs that made this music," first, by keeping the carriage waiting a full hour in a drenching rain, that had set in soon after it drove to the door; and next, by appearing in a dress very inimical to his taste. The trio dined out, and by the time they arrived at their place of destination, Mr. Courtney was again silent and spiritless.

Montague observed, with great pain, that his friend sought to drown his cares by plentiful potations from the mirth-inspiring bottle; and that when they re-entered the chariot, the elegant-minded Eustace, whose manners and language had in the morning evinced a delicacy of mind, a tenderness of heart, a refinement of address, that rendered him equally estimable and delightful, was in the evening transformed

formed into the inebriated, noisy, harsh, unpolished debauchee. His *brusqueries* were sharply retorted by their original cause—his beautiful sentimental wife; and, the bounds of politeness once overstepped, Montague was compelled to witness a genuine scene of connubial warfare. How edifying to his uninitiated ears! Shut up in the carriage, he could not escape, and it was in vain for him to interfere—Mr. Courtney *could* not hear reason, and Mrs. Courtney *would* not hear reason—she would only hear herself. By the time they reached home, the lady had worked herself into strong hysterics, and was borne to her chamber in a state of piteous agitation.

Montague could never tearless view a woman's tearful eye—he implored the forbearance and compassion of his friend. Mr. Courtney had been once as penetrable; but he now very calmly looked upon the weeping shrieking fair, and explained his obduracy, by saying he was used to it.

We

We do believe use does reconcile the human heart painlessly to behold almost every species of human misery; we would, therefore, urgently recommend married ladies not to let their tears and fits too frequently recur—not to wear out the chords of sympathy and pity, lest their husbands, like Mr. Courtney, cease to commiserate their tender wailings, because "they are used to it."

Mr. Egerton remained a week at the Woodlands, not a day, not an hour, of which period passed unmarked by vexations: servants harassed, insolent, and dismissed—tradesmen teazed, offending, and offended—children, sick from neglect or repletion—furniture lost, injured, and destroyed—money profusely spent and carelessly thrown away—an affectionate and attached husband converted into a morose and indifferent cynic—and all this was effected by the graceful, the beautiful, the accomplished, the courteous Julia Courtney!

Good

Good reader, if this little episode has any moral, it has been feelingly developed. Domestic peace and domestic dignity cannot exist without the presence of the humbler virtues—activity, gentleness, housewifery; if necessary amidst wealth and rank, how much more necessary in mediocrity?

This visit set Mr. Egerton thinking, as we wish it may do all those who peruse its description, how much good had he long possessed, unconscious of its worth! Those every-day comforts, which, because every day enjoyed, cease to be prized, unruffled ease—undisturbed tranquillity—the regular provision for daily wants—the invisible but active agency that directs every household movement—the unseen but not unfelt vigilance that preserves in healthful motion every spring and wheel of the domestic machine, and keeps all in steady action. The most splendidly-gemmed watch, furnished with every requisite part, is but a worthless bauble, unless regularly

gularly wound up, and set in motion by the hand of regularity.

With a quarter of Mr. Courtney's income—not a quarter of his establishment, in a rented house and a hired domain—Montague Egerton possessed comforts and luxuries unknown to his wealthy friend.

Whence could this arise? In the *good sense, good temper,* and *activity* of his wife. Mothers, you are all educating your daughters for wives—behold the three essential requisites for that state.

Domestic happiness! thou only bliss
Of Paradise that hast surviv'd the fall,
Though few now taste thee, unimpair'd and pure,
Or, tasting, long enjoy thee; too infirm
Or too incautious to preserve thy sweets
Unmixt with drops of bitter, which neglect,
Or temper, sheds into thy crystal cup.

COWPER.

CHAPTER XIII.

The homely Wife and the learned Maiden.

Mrs. Egerton had passed her hours in grateful tranquillity. Her friends, the Knowlesdons, had been prevented from visiting her by other more pressing claims: the solicitor had been from home on business, and his sister had been more than usually occupied with her invalid. Helena divided her time between thinking of her absent husband and acting for her surrounding children: the first employment left no record, and of the last no ostensible sign appeared, but what might be traced in the healthy happy looks of the little ones, and a few stanzas found hastily inscribed in her pocket-book, which we will present to our readers.

LINES

LINES

ON READING MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH'S SONNET, BEGINNING WITH—"*SIGHING, I SEE YON LITTLE GROUP AT PLAY.*"

Why, tender moralist—why, with a sigh,
  Does your fond bosom view your infant race?
Why does deep care o'ergloom your pensive eye,
  As sportive mirth in their gay looks you trace?

How diff'rent thou from me!—When my sweet boy
  Darts buoyant, laughing, o'er the verdant plain,
My pulses throb with nearly equal joy,
  And boundless gratitude fills ev'ry vein.

For, oh! a mother's faith, a mother's pride,
  Paints him the heir of all his father's worth,
By equal virtue as by blood allied,
  And nobly daring, emulate his birth.

Hope views those feeble limbs, to manhood grown,
  Firm, bold, majestic, grace life's happiest hours;
It views that tender mind, to vigour blown,
  Cull from fair science all her choicest flow'rs.

It views that little heart, expanding, yield
  To ev'ry dear and tender claim of love;
Now sooth'd by pity—now by courage steel'd,
  Bold as the lion, gentle as the dove.

And, pensive songstress! far beyond this joy—
  Beyond whate'er earth's narrow bound has giv'n,
It views yon little, laughing, feeble boy,
  A pure and spotless candidate for heav'n.

Mr.

Mr. Egerton had been absent but one week, which, though by the computation of his feelings was an age, yet, in fact, counted only seven days. But how much may happen in seven days! Helena indeed had no news for him, but she quickly remarked the zest with which her husband seemed to enjoy his home: this was most acceptable news to her. Montague indeed found a hitherto-undiscovered charm in every arrangement: the stilly activity of his wife—the prompt obedience of his domestics—the controlled gaiety of his children—the punctuality of his meals—the neat elegance of his table—the cleanliness of his apartments—these comforts he had before possessed as things of course, as satisfactions enjoyed by every man of his rank and fortune: the Woodlands had taught him another lesson—and he now accepted, as invaluable blessings, what he had heretofore received as the common and inevitable appendants of his lot.

There had been moments when Mr. Egerton

Egerton viewed his wife with displacency, perchance for even other reasons than the usual one—because she *was* his wife, even when she had looked most beautiful, and acted most meritoriously. But his heart now warmed towards her, with an ardour, a respect, that promised to sustain no change of temperature—no chills, no blights. He had discovered that she was the source of all his bliss—and who is insensible to selfish good? Gratitude, thus awakened, outglows the fervency of the most impassioned love; esteem, thus founded, surpasses in permanency the highest admiration mere exterior graces can excite.

Mr. Egerton's first call was upon his friends, the Knowlesdons, where he found the solicitor just returned home from a short absence; and, better still, met Miss Patty Muddleton. In a few moments he heard the whole history of the past eventful period—"That shocking wicked man, lord Ruthven, had decamped with a *chère amie*, and left the poor miserable countess

 without

without money, and without friends. It was easy to understand how the noble earl could despoil his lady of her wealth, and stop the funds for her daily supply, but it was not so easy to understand how he could rob her of her friends, for friends we have always considered as unalienable property."

Mr. Egerton did not ask Miss Patty, if loss of friends was the invariable consequence of loss of property? nor do we presume to hint it ever was, or ever would be so: we would only modestly suggest, that we think the term, *friends*, is *sometimes* misapplied.

From the castle Miss Patty made a quick transition to the lowly vicarage. The handsome young curate had buried his blooming bride—"Oh, cruel instance of the uncertainty of human life!" So said Miss Patty, with a sigh; then, with a smile, turned round to inform Mrs. Mary how cheaply she had purchased a durable silk, that would wash and wear for a dozen

winters

winters at least; and that, after that period, she was resolved to treat herself with a rich velvet, which would, with care, last her twice twelve years!

With whom had lord Ruthven eloped? Report said—with Miss ——: we will not stain our paper with the name. Susan Knowlesdon vociferously pronounced the impossibility of such dereliction in her favourite acquaintance; Mrs. Mary approved her niece's advocation of the absent, but censured the decisive tone in which she contradicted the rumour.—"I dearly love the enthusiasm of youth, my dear Susan, when it warms on the side of virtue and benevolence; but it is sometimes a most misleading impulse."

"Oh, aunt! I cannot be in this mistaken."

"My dear child, what an assertion for one of your age!—Cannot be mistaken!"

"It is curious," said Mr. Knowlesdon, "how invariably ignorance is presumptuous and folly arrogant."

Susan frowned at this remark, but her frown was converted into a blush, when Mrs. Mansel called, with information that the companion of the earl was indeed Miss ——.

Mrs. Mary made no comment on the subject to her niece, but allowed the moral to make its own impression—as we shall do, leaving our youthful readers to discover and observe the mortifications incurred by rash and peremptory assertion, in the awkward feeling of retraction, the humiliation of error, and the implication of incivility.

The gentlemen next proceeded to discuss the favourite theme of manly disquisition—politics, and a parallel was drawn between the madman of Sweden and the madman of modern France—his partial success, and, after discomfiture in Russia, his flight, involved in disgrace and replete with disaster. Mrs. Mary silently attended, interested in the subject, but modestly declining her interference: Miss Patty, enraptured

raptured with the anticipation of display, exultingly joined in the conversation.—

"Yes—that Charles V. was an astonishing man: I always admired his charming billet to his wife—'Madam, we have lost every thing but our honour:' then, after his marriage to our Mary, playing all those tricks at Benger."

No one spoke; how could they?—Miss Patty had *got* beyond the latitude of the wisest present; she therefore had the double satisfaction of all the learning and all the talking to herself.

"Which is your favourite, Mrs. Mansel—Charles, king of Spain, or Charles, emperor of Germany?"

Mrs. Mansel was fain to confess her ignorance—she knew neither the one nor the other.

Miss Patty, assuming a condescending air of instruction, as if lowering herself to the capacity of her hearer, graciously remarked, that people could not always help their ignorance; for her part, she was quite

a devourer of books. The solicitor drew back, as if afraid of sharing the fate of books—of being devoured by the eyes of the learned spinster. She continued—" I had always an *illiterate* taste—I was always quick in remembering the *epoker* of events—I must say, I always thought the murder of the Sicilian massacre a great stain on that same Charles."

The solicitor fairly started; he had patiently borne the glorious jumble of the *three* Charleses—he had allowed the billet of the gallant Francis to be taken from its owner—nay, he had permitted the marriage of Mary with her father-in-law, and submitted to the substitution of Benger for Bender, though, in doing so, he had to stride over Europe; but to have poor Charles of Sweden rendered responsible for so many more murders than those of which he had been guilty in the cruel depopulation of his own country—this he could not bear. He was therefore about to rectify the learned lady in some trifling mistakes

mistakes of names, dates, and geography, when Mrs. Mansel rising to depart, his speech was checked.

Miss Patty now expatiated on the miseries of ignorance, and the luxuries of knowledge—"To be sure, every body is not so fond of illiterate pursuits as I am, nor do I think a great deal of knowledge so very necessary."

"Such knowledge as yours is indeed almost as unattainable as it is unnecessary," said the solicitor, with a look of profound respect.

The lady, smirking, retired, well pleased with her "illiterate" exhibition. Mr. Knowlesdon asked his niece, if she wanted any further proof of the justice of his remark, that ignorance is presumptuous, and folly arrogant? But Susan implored her uncle's mercy.

"Shallowest streams murmur loudest," said Mr. Egerton.

"Ay, truly do they," replied Mr. Knowlesdon—"There's my sister, who sat by and

said nothing, could have put you and me to rights on almost any incident of ancient and modern history, whilst that babbler—but I won't put myself into a passion."

CHAPTER XIV.

A true Description of the Effects of an Elopement.

When Miss Muddleton arrived at Random Hall, a new wonder had just come to light—Miss Clementina Henrietta Maria Wronghead "was found missing," and the young cornet of the village troop was also a defaulter.

The house was in an uproar, and messengers dispatched in every quarter. Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon hastened, with her brother and her niece, to the aid of the despoiled family. Susan turned pale at the scene of domestic misery she now witnessed: lady Wronghead lay stretched, in

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an alarming fainting-fit, on the sofa; sir Gabriel sat beside her, chafing her cold hand, a few big tears rolling down his cheeks, and his lips quivering with half-articulated words; Miss Patty, with successful assiduity, was making "confusion more confounding," by her mingled threats and lamentations—her incoherent commands and entreaties; Adam Wronghead, Esq. in his morning-gown and slippers, seemed to think there "was much ado about nothing;" Jack, whilst furiously drawing on his boots, was beseeching his father to be calm and patient, himself swearing like a trooper at every word, and vowing the most bloody and prompt vengeance on the military kidnapper.

Miss Patty, delighted with the exuberance of horror and despair, shrieked aloud, as she caught the arm of Mrs. Knowlesdon —"Oh, dreadful! dreadful! Jack is going to fight: he will be killed—he must be killed!" There is nothing like jumping at once into the sublime.

The reviving lady Wronghead fell into fresh swoonings. Sir Gabriel wrung his son's hand, in speechless but piercing eloquence. Jack understood the appeal—"Fear me not, my father; I will do nothing rash—for your sake—for my mother's."

A glance at the death-struck form of that mother caused the last words to be pronounced in scarce audible sounds. He sprung to the door—there the entwining arms of his tender aunt arrested his further progress. With no responsive gentleness he snatched her hand from its grasp, and replying with a rude "Pshaw!" to her soft pleadings, rushed out of the room, and springing on his horse, was out of sight in a moment.

Miss Patty now ran about the room, wringing her hands, and performing every necessary act of distraction. The solicitor, who saw that every body suffered from this display but the fair actress herself, found there was nothing for it but banishing

ing the exquisitely sensitive Miss Muddleton. Under pretence therefore that he supposed her to be in a fit, he caught her in his arms, and bore her to another apartment. Her disorder had probably reached its crisis, when her trembling frame rested in the nervous grasp of the solicitor; for it was terrible to behold how much her agitation seemed at that moment to increase; but it was also delightful to observe how instantly she recovered, when she found herself in a room by herself*.

Mrs. Mary, with no external sign of feeling but a solitary tear that stood chilled on her pale cheek, seemed oddly enough to conceive that this was not a moment to shew her own sensibility, but her energy—not to mourn herself, but to calm those that mourned. Devoting her thoughts and efforts therefore to the wretched mother, she had soon the satisfaction of seeing her revive; and awaking from the stupefaction

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* Of course, performers cease to perform, when they have neither spectators nor auditors.

of grief, was relieved by a plentiful shower of tears—" Oh, my dear Mrs. Mary! this ingratitude from a child I so fondly loved —whom I nursed at my bosom—whom I watched with such unceasing tenderness —whose idlest whims I so invariably indulged!" Another burst of tears checked further utterance.

The day was spent in unrelieved wretchedness—the night in aching watchfulness; every moment lengthened by the heavy torture of suspense—every sound listened to in all the sickening anguish of expectation.

Sir Gabriel had refused his consent to the match, because, as he told his daughter, he too well knew the infamous character of her lover. But Clementina loved herself better than her father—preferred the indulgence of her own whims to the dictates of her duty—chose rather to vow obedience to a worthless stranger, than to a long-tried indulgent parent—to throw herself from the shelter of home, friends, family,

family, upon the mercy of an unknown, unprincipled libertine.

Late the third evening, Jack returned, pale, and exhausted with fatigue and high-wrought feelings. He had discovered the fugitives, but too late to rescue his sister: she had, the day before his arrival, plighted her faith to her worthless companion, in a small village on the borders of the sister kingdom.

Sir Gabriel said little, but the blow struck to his heart—the gout flew from the extremities to the more vital parts, and for many days his life was in imminent peril.

Susan Knowlesdon had abundance of leisure to expatiate on the scene before her: a tender mother stretched, feeble and suffering, on one bed—an affectionate father, writhing in mental and bodily anguish, on another; a house, late the abode of cheerfulness and prosperity, now engloomed by sorrow and anxiety—no joyous sounds, no merry steps, broke the brooding silence—a few domestics stealing

ing along the passages, with haggard countenances and noiseless movements, were all the human beings she encountered; for Jack was at the pillow of his suffering father, and Mrs. Mary stationed by her loudly-lamenting sister-in-law: and all this misery was the work of one of the most cherished inmates of the dwelling she had so cruelly gloomed!—Susan beheld this wreck of family tranquillity with profound emotion. She had heard, and she had read of elopements—nay, to be honest, her mind had more than once glanced on the possibility of her own; but she had not before looked deeper on the picture than the imaged bliss of generously throwing herself into the arms of the chosen swain—a little weeping, a little apologizing, and the bliss of being restored to parental favour. She had not dwelt on the other possibilities of the scene: the chosen swain becoming tired of his trusting mistress—his having sought her for the dirty lucre of gain—his abusing and abandoning

abandoning her on the disappointment of such an expectation—the hazard, that the agreeable partner at a ball might not prove quite so agreeable a partner for life—that the handsome face, so bewitching when clothed in smiles, might not look quite so charming when arrayed in frowns—the chance that parents may never forgive, and, oh depth of misery! may not live to forgive, death-struck by that sharper than a serpent's sting—filial ingratitude.

Sir Gabriel's life was saved, but his tranquillity was destroyed; and Jack swore he could better bear his father's wildest exclamations, or his mother's loudest plaints, than this calm look of bosomed anguish. His smile was fled—the mirthful joke no longer passed his lip—his eye no longer beamed with playful humour; the vagrant sigh, the absent question, the look of patient endurance, was all that now met the observation of the watchful Jack, whilst his mother sat weeping by, unable to suppress her anguish, or listen to the

generous

generous sympathy of her self-governed husband. From such a scene he tore himself, to address his fugitive sister—to awaken her, if possible, from selfish ease to penitence and humility.

"I write to inform you of what perhaps you desire to hear—the consequences of your—what you may entitle—pretty innocent freak. Your father has been at the point of death, but he upbraided you not—'She whom I loved so fondly—but I forgive her—she is still my child—But she has broken her poor father's trusting heart—yet, oh, may she be happy!'—These, and such as these, were the only sentences he ever uttered. Your mother is pining beneath the wound given by a daughter's hand—that daughter, how cherished! how indulged!—Clementina, can you forgive yourself?—can you be happy?"

This letter reached the bride the very day

day cornet Williams had thrown off the lover and assumed the husband—in other words, had ceased to dissimulate. He was yet pacing the room in wrathful mood. One little month she had been a wife!—Whoever envies her her feelings, "let them go and do likewise."

The month that had passed so heavily at the Hall—that had reduced its once-happy owners to such severe suffering, fled with no lighter wing over Castle Ruthven, and left behind yet more impression. The family of the Wrongheads, generally disposed to acts of pity and assistance, had been wholly engrossed by their own troubles; and though sir Gabriel was out of danger, he needed incessant attention, and was incapable of any exertion.

The noble heir, pretty tenacious of his birthright, carefully seized every honour of eldership, and during his father's illness, had played the baronet-elect in very courtly style; even Jack was sometimes oppressed by his greatness and authority, and

and it demanded all his patience to adhere to that admirable maxim—"Bear and forbear." But when any thing was to be done by hand or head, Adam Wrong-head, Esq. very conveniently forgot his usurped dignity, and allowed his younger brother, unquestioning, to fulfil every duty, and arrange every business: thus, while one moved an empty pageant, the other was the effective agent of all the peace and all the good management at Random Hall. We do not desire to dissect that mysterious fungus—a selfish heart, or we might explain what were the thoughts of the cold unfeeling coxcomb, when he beheld his brother the pillar of the family-comfort and family-consequence—his mother leaning on him for consolation and support—his father looking to him for counsel and exertion—his uncle turning to him for help and co-operation—every domestic resorting to him for orders and regulation.

Mrs. Egerton had taken a feeling share in

in the disasters of her neighbours and associates—she had lamented lady Ruthven's sufferings, and participated in lady Wronghead's grief; for Helena was one of those that felt, "it was not good that man should be alone;" she was one who believed that such innumerable affections were engrafted in the human heart—not to wither, unknown and unexerted, but to bestow the purest joys of life. She was bound on all sides to her fellow-creatures—by pity, by esteem, by gratitude, by affection: every social incident called forth her friendly emotions; the wants of a poor neighbour—the attentions of a rich one—the sorrows of the unfortunate—the joys of the prosperous—the visit of an acquaintance—the letter of a friend—each and all were so many excitements of the animating and gratifying feelings of her benevolent heart. In sooth to say, there were no periods of stagnation in her breast; yet the current of sensibility ran not like the

impetuous

impetuous stream—now turbulent and impetuous, distorting, by its violence, every reflected image—now rushing from the rapid torrent to a still waveless pool—no, it equably moved, as the gentle but even-flowing stream, mildly but incessantly impulsed.

Like the emperor of old, the vigilant Titus, Mrs. Egerton "thought the day lost" that passed unmarked by some act of usefulness or kindness. Thus, instead of shrinking from exertion, she threw herself into the way for it—she sought occasions of adding as much as was in her power to the sum of human happiness. What wonder, then, that she had always somebody to feel for or to assist—to pity or to love?

Reader, this is an epicurean doctrine: it teaches man to enjoy his own good and that of his neighbours—to forget selfish cares in social joys—to temper the exultation of selfish prosperity by recollections of

of social woe—and to brighten the moments of selfish sorrow by the remembrance of social joy.

CHAPTER XV.

On Piety and Pride.

"Our Father which art in heaven" was the morning and evening prayer of Mrs. Egerton; she bore through the day a remembrance of the brotherly love this address implicated towards her fellow-creatures—of the dependence and tender devotion it expressed towards her Creator: rising from her knees, she had not only performed one animating duty, but given a pledge to fulfil every other. With her, piety was not the offspring of time and place—not confined to Sabbaths and temples, rituals and postures—not the regulated expression of appointed forms and rules:

rules: with her, piety was the warm effusion of feeling—the perpetual glow that sprung from gratitude—the secret tie that bound her to her Maker—the silent unbroken communion that daily and hourly gladdened her heart, enlivened her joys, soothed her sorrows, invigorated her hopes, confirmed her virtues, corrected her frailties.

Beneath the glorious expanse of heaven, as she gazed on celestial or terrestrial objects, breathed the fresh gale or listened to the woodland choir, she thought upon Him who commanded, and they were created. In lonely or social hours, amid scenes of pleasure or of peace, she blessed Him who gave her the powers and the means of enjoyment. In seasons of sickness or of sorrow, she lifted up her spirit to Him from whom all comfort cometh. Prayer mingled in all her aspirations—with every thought and feeling united praise.

Whether the presence of this animating principle caused the energy and equanimity of Helena's character and temper, we

we leave to be conjectured; as also, whether the total absence of all such sentiments produced the feebleness and petulance so conspicuous in lady Ruthven. The countess indeed had to boast a substitute for piety—she had installed herself in all the pomp and pageantry of pride—pride, that elevating assumption of the worldling, which, in fancy at least, places its possessor above the frailties as well as the humiliations of meanness and poverty.

Lady Ruthven had borne up against every abasement of character, with a perseverance that, in a better cause, had been most laudable; but she had made no uncommon mistake, in flattering herself that audacity was a good substitute for dignity, and that those who did not blush had nothing for which to blush. Truly we are not surprised at the lady's misconception; for how often doth guilt look up undaunted, when innocence bends down the modest eye! We would however desire to make a marked distinction between those

who

who do not blush from purity, and those who do not blush from hardihood. But lady Ruthven was now touched at a more vulnerable point than mere character—her pride was wounded—the pillar on which was propped all her greatness was broken, and down fell all it sustained, grovelling to the dust.

We have already tried to define this honour-giving principle, and we will again make an attempt to delineate some of the many Proteus-forms in which "it dazzles men's eyes." Pray, young ladies, have you never seen one of your acquaintance assume a more than usual self-satisfied air when sporting a new hat or new feather? —have you never received a more than wonted condescending bow from a beau striding in tonish boots or tonish coat? —have you never encountered a "mutilated curtsey" from a belle stepping out of a modish chariot, or leaning on the arm o a modish grandee?—Depend upon it, all these several individuals were labouring under

under the disease of pride, just as much as the matron who exults in her elegant dinner, or the cit who chuckles in his accumulating funds.

Again: have you never seen a damsel sinking under shame at being beheld in homely attire or lowly society—in being detected in humble duties or uncourtly abodes?—Be assured, the malady is then severely affecting her; for the maiden whom dress or externals can depress, dress and externals can elevate; and he or she that can blush for such adventitious matters, acknowledges the empire of pride, and would be arrogant, in opposite circumstances.

But we beg particularly to call attention to the real *humility* of the proud. Magnanimously putting *self* out of the question, they draw their honours from sources which any mortal can share with them. How noble, thus to put their dignity within the reach of every ignoble aspirer!—A lottery-ticket can, in a mo-

ment, invest the beggar with all the rights of pride, or a lucky distribution of titles entitle the shopboy to all the dignities of arrogance. To lower our examples: the same bonnet and plume that constitute the dignity of the lady, in time descend to be the source of consequence to her serving-maid; even the fringe-belted waistcoat that so conspicuously elevated Adam Wronghead, Esq. above his brother beaux, no less exalted, in his turn, M. Fripon above his brother lacqueys.

Take away the splendid garb or costly equipage, attire the proud in mean habiliments, unattended and ungarnished, and, cameleon-like, they take the tincture of the guise they wear—haughty looks give place to downcast shamefacedness, and the stately stride to shuffling paces. Now, if this is not being *in fact* humble-minded, we know not what is; or rather, we expect we have shewn the close affinity of pride and meanness.

Lady Ruthven was one of these. Vice humbled

humbled her not—guilt raised no blush upon her cheek, no horror in her eye; she leant upon wealth and greatness, fine clothes, fine coaches, and fine dinners, and was a while upborne; but when these ceased to sustain her, she fell, and "all her blushing* honours" fell with her.

Mrs. Egerton was not mean enough to be proud, but she was wise enough to be humble. The deplorable accounts she heard of lady Ruthven's unfriended desolation awakened her compassion—not indeed that it had ever slept, but towards the countess glorying in frailty, it had lain slumbering, ready, however, to be roused into action at the first summons. The moment was indeed arrived, when, as Mrs. Egerton had emphatically exclaimed, "every hand should be held out to her"—lady Ruthven was repentant: affliction often powerfully produces penitence. We pause not to descant on the greater

* Most truly we may say, *blushing* honours.

greater merit of those amending from more ingenuous motives—reflection, humiliation of heart, not of fortune; but, like Mrs. Egerton, we will satisfy ourselves with the effect, without too pertinaciously diving into the cause.

As the countess lost the respect of the world (we have explained the generally-accepted meaning of this term before), she seemed to gain the consideration of Helena; and this lady panted for an opportunity of offering the consolations of pity and encouragement, without exactly knowing how to introduce herself at Castle Ruthven. To go there in all the triumph of condescending virtue was incompatible with her code of morality; but opportunities are seldom (may we say, *never?)* earnestly sought, without being found.

Mrs. Egerton heard that the appetite of lady Ruthven, vitiated by indulgence and enfeebled by disease, loathed all simple nutriment, and relished novelties and delicates alone: game, poultry, sweetmeats,

had

had in turn been tried, and had in turn been rejected. Mr. Egerton had brought from the Woodlands, as a present for his children, some boxes of rare Italian conserves: these Helena forwarded with a kind respectful message to lady Ruthven; for however she despised guilt, she respected misfortune.

The countess felt a strange revulsion of heart at this unexpected gift, and more unexpected message.—"From Mrs. Egerton!" she mentally repeated, several times repeated, with surprise, with delight, with gratitude—What heart, in the moment of desolation, is not susceptible to kindness?—She accepted the gift, but more the attention that dictated it, with gratitude; and the courteous message that expressed her thanks emboldened Helena to continue daily inquiries after her health and convalescence.

A kind of communication, a sort of acquaintance, thus grew up between the parties, and was established by the kindly

feelings of each—one desirous to console, the other needing to be consoled. At length, instead of sending a servant to the castle, Helena called herself. These personal inquiries were daily made. Lady Ruthven was rapidly declining—Helena risked an entreaty to be admitted to her chamber. We must excuse the kind of hesitation with which this request was received by the agitated countess: but misery is a wonderful disperser of prejudices, a potent abaser of greatness—Mrs. Egerton was admitted. Though her eyes rested on no object but the pallid countenance of the withering invalid, though her thoughts were fixed on bestowing the best consolation in the best manner, our readers will not forgive us if we are equally abstracted—if we do not give some delineation of the apartment and its garniture.

The room was spacious, and its high roof richly carved and painted; the canopied bed, with crimson drapery, decked with glittering fringe and gilded cornices —the

—the superb marble mantlepiece, finely sculptured—the gorgeous velvet chair, in which, propped on pillows, sat the emaciated countess—all these spoke the exuberance of wealth; but what spoke the dim eye of the mistress of the scene?—not exuberance of responsive felicity: yet was its expression profound—the intensity of despair.

Mrs. Egerton tottered as she ascended the magnificent stone staircase—she trembled as she entered the chamber. The countess was alone—no friend was at her side, to beguile suffering and whisper consolation—no attached menial to watch her glance, and yield the unbidden service—no husband—no child—no relative—not even one pitying acquaintance. The tears rushed to the eyes of the agitated visitor, and the kind inquiry died away inaudible upon her quivering lips; but she took the languid hand of the sufferer with a look, a pressure that could not be misunderstood.

The countess bowed; she was too weak

to rise, and a spasm in her throat rendered speech at that moment impossible. Helena rallied her scattered spirits, and after a short pause, softly murmured her inquiries —"I hope I see you better—I hope you feel better?"

"Worse—hourly worse," replied the countess, in deep and hollow tones: then, in broken sentences, she poured into the listening ear of her compassionate auditor the melancholy history of her sufferings—of all she mentally and bodily endured—of all she feared to endure. The catalogue was long: such tedious days!—such miserable nights! sometimes without a momentary slumber—sometimes marked with such terrific visions! Then such waking horrors, when the mind, struggling between dreams and thoughts, waged agonizing warfare!—Oh! too much was real in the fearful imagery. Then such incessant bodily pain—such bodily weakness—she that was once so vigorous, so healthy!

"But your servants think you better."

"My

"My servants!—they know nothing of the matter—they never approach me but when they cannot avoid it; they care not for me—feel not for me. I never see a living creature—no, not one, to pity my miserable condition. See how I am shrunk and consumed!" The countess threw back the folds of her richly-laced sleeve, and exposed her withered bloodless wrist.

"If you could take more food—more nourishment."

"I loath all nourishment—food is poison to me; my weakened stomach cannot digest the slenderest aliment—the most delicate fruit throws me into agonies. My head, at this moment, aches to torture."

Mrs. Egerton strove to adjust the costly cushions, and threw aside the golden tassels that pressed hard on the woe-worn cheek of the countess.—"Perhaps you would rest easier on the bed?"

Helena hastened to draw the silken curtains, place the downy pillows, adjust the snowy linen, arrange the magnificent coun-

terpane, and returned to assist the sufferer to her splendid couch. But she shrunk from the removal.—"Oh! no, no!—there I am worse than here."

"If you could do any thing to beguile the time."

"What can I do?—My sight is weakened—my fingers tremulous: I speak with pain, yet to think is agony."

"Would you allow the visits of your friends?"

"Friends!—have I any friends?" exclaimed lady Ruthven, in the low murmur of suppressed anguish.

Helena marked her failing spirits, and rang for refreshment. A richly embossed silver tray, covered with the rarest dainties and the most exquisite wines, was brought in—the countess tasted every thing, but loathed all: she however drank some of the strongest cordials, which, while they fed the fever in her veins, gave her a momentary sense of invigoration.

At the end of two hours, Mrs. Egerton retired,

retired, pressingly urged to repeat her visits.—" And for this worthless wealth, for this unenjoyed rank, Mrs. Mordaunt resigned peace and virtue! for this, the happy and respectable wife became the wretched and despised fugitive!—She has gained eminence indeed, but it is the eminence of conspicuous guilt, and conspicuous misery." So thought Helena, as pensively she walked home.

At the entrance of the park she met her husband, who, with attentive kindness, had strolled that way to give her his arm. As Helena leant, with grateful affection, upon this dear support, she could not help asking herself, how Mrs. Mordaunt could desert the most precious ties, the most repaying duties of life?

Mr. Egerton roused her from her reverie—" Your compassion must be indeed extensive, my dear Helena, to render you desirous and capable of so often enduring the society of that worthless woman."

" I am sure her situation would receive

your pity. But, my dearest Montague, you are falling into the common mistake, of deeming a person worthless who has certain known faults. Believe me, lady Ruthven is not worthless. Will you allow me to say, I do not think a human being ever did, ever can exist, wholly worthless?"

Mr. Egerton smiled.

"I permit you to smile at what you may deem my credulity," continued Helena; "but it will be my turn to smile, if I can make you a convert to my opinion."

"*If* you can," replied her husband, gaily.

"Well, then," proceeded Mrs. Egerton, with earnestness—"tell me, is it not a common, a general circumstance, for the most reprobate of mankind to possess friends and admirers?—I will only name the great scourge of Europe, Buonaparte—even he has admirers and friends—ay, sharers and abettors of guilt."

"Not entirely so, my love: besides sharers of guilt, few, very few mortals, however

however erring, are without some one to whom they are dear, by whom they are prized: witness the sighs, if not the tears, that attend the deathbed of the most faulty. Now, sorrow can only arise from some species of attachment or good-liking, and attachment can only be founded on the knowledge of good qualities, for the most vicious cannot love vice."

"I heartily admit that the human heart is not constituted to attach itself to any modification of vice."

"Well, then, it must be some modification of virtue that attracts regard."

"That must be conceded in course. You are a better logician than I thought you were."

"In such a cause, who would not desire to be eloquent?"

"I will finish the argument for you, Helena. If the apparently criminal are not without virtues——"

"Every human being must have some virtues," exclaimed Helena, with a triumphant

phant smile. Montague tenderly pressed her hand as she animatedly continued her remarks—"But we were not speaking of the most reprobate of mankind."

Montague dryly responded—"We were speaking of lady Ruthven."

"Indeed, my love, she has many good qualities: her severe suffering at the desertion of lord Ruthven—her agitation in beholding me—her shattered frame and distracted mind—all speak her a woman of feeling."

"Ay—of selfish feeling."

"No, Montague, no—of right feeling. Had you heard the tone in which she declared, 'to think was agony,' you would not have doubted the genuineness of her sensibility. Why should 'thought agonize,' unless the heart felt and lamented its errors?"

"Be it granted that lady Ruthven is susceptible of regret for her frailties—I fear that is the only merit even you can discover."

"Oh,

"Oh, pardon me!—she is also capable of gratitude: never were kindnesses received with more ardent gratitude than mine by her."

"Poor woman! she is not used to kindness."

"How much, my love, is comprised in those few words!—If my small attentions could open an erring breast to such amiable emotions, how many virtues might higher efforts of benevolence draw forth to view!"

"I will not deny but that you have, in some degree, substantiated your position: but what good quality, I wonder, could you draw from that sterile soil, the bosom of Miss Patty Muddleton?"

"She is perfectly good-natured—I never saw her out of temper in my life; and you must allow that sometimes she is severely tried."

"But what can you say for my lady Wronghead?"

"That,

"That, with many disagreeable habits, she is a fond mother and a faithful wife."

"Find a virtue in Adam Wronghead, Esq. and, without further controversy, I will subscribe to your axiom."

"That I cannot name his merits is because I so slightly have studied his character; but that he has some there can be no doubt, or his father, the excellent sir Gabriel, would not so warmly regard him. He always appears an attached and obedient son."

"I will not say another word against your creed, Helena; I only wish every human being would, like you, exert their ingenuity to discover their neighbour's merits."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XVI.

Such Things are.

ONCE invested in the privileges of friendly intercourse, Mrs. Egerton daily visited lady Ruthven, and, by every means in her power, sought to sooth her mind and invigorate her body. The first indeed she found the most arduous undertaking; yet, though she could not "pluck the thorn from memory," she had the consolation of knowing that she had beguiled many hours that would otherwise have rolled heavily with the poor abandoned sufferer. Her visits effected one other essential benefit: her presence roused the domestics to more prompt and vigilant attention, not only to their lady, but to her infant family. The nursery Helena superintended with a mother's watchfulness—relieved many a little ailment—

ailment—prevented many an act of menial tyranny; and, though she often wept bitter tears as she folded the unconscious prattlers to her bosom, she patiently bore the selfish struggles that accompanied an act of useful benevolence. For the sinking mother she suggested many small ameliorations of pain and lassitude, many petty comforts, which otherwise had been overlooked: but Helena earnestly desired to do more than relieve the body, or regulate the temporal claims of the countess; she strove to do more than to amuse—to console; more than console—to amend: she sought to heal the wounds of the mind—offer balm to the lacerated heart—recall lady Ruthven to a sense of her spiritual interests. She had been once a faithful wife and tender mother: could Helena awaken her to a recollection of the virtues she had once practised!—But the task required time and patience: patience Mrs. Egerton could extensively command, but time it was not for her to govern. She

essayed

essayed many modes to introduce some beneficial subject, but her hearer generally started from her lead.

One morning lady Ruthven appeared depressed by a night of more than usual suffering. Her pitying visitant endeavoured to draw her mind to some befitting theme: something was said of the transient nature of this world's sufferings—of the hope of mercy and peace in the world to come; but the countess started so wildly, and as she murmured, "world to come," passed her hand across her forehead with such a frenzied look and manner, that Helena for a moment sought to sooth her mind with other images.

But of what could she speak with any hope of tranquillizing the spirits of the tortured invalid?—Of her husband?—he was the scorpion that had stung her severest: of her children?—they were so many daggers for her conscious heart: of her former virtue?—how stood it opposed to her present guilt? of her earlier felicity?

city?—its recollections gave sharpness to the dart of immediate wretchedness: of her family?—their images recurred, mingled with the disgrace and sorrow she had heaped upon them: of her friends?—their faded remembrances whispered to her, she had no longer friends. Could a mind half-frenzied with variety of torture, listen to criticisms on men or manners, on books or philosophy?—Helena was forced back to the only subject that remained, one which she deemed could never fail of its impression, even on hearts chilled by selfishness or deadened by prosperity, for it promoted the dearest interests—religion. Mrs. Egerton watched for a moment of recovered calmness, and profiting by the mournful composure of her exhausted companion, and by the agitation of her own feelings, which seemed to warrant her gravity, again introduced the sacred theme—"We are in better hands than our own, my dear lady Ruthven; and there is a mercy ever ready to mark and encourage the humblest virtues."

Lady

Lady Ruthven seemed about to speak, but Helena, fearing some start of feeling, from the quickness of her eye, hastily proceeded—"It is no trivial merit to endure bodily pain with the patience you often display."

"When that pain is not self-inflicted," murmured lady Ruthven.

"Who is faultless?—The best of us fail in our duty."

"Then what have I!" exclaimed the countess, in a quick and hurried manner.

Mrs. Egerton overlooked her abruptness, and returned to her first position: she followed the clue of superintending Providence—of mercy ever ready to forgive—of power ever equal to perform—of wisdom ever lenient to judge; her remarks were few, simple, humble, consoling; her hearer listened, and was soothed. A month of solitude and suffering had wrought a great change in the feelings as well as the frame of the countess: as her

beauty

beauty faded, the vanity it inspired and fed had withered; as she lost the capacity to enjoy earthly delights, earthly delights ceased to engross her attachment: the world declined from her view—but the human mind cannot exist without some object on which to rest its contemplations; as earth receded, therefore, from her meditations, heaven gradually glided before her. Many, indeed, were the relapses from piety sustained by the countess and forgiven by Helena—the instructress ever more prone to doubt her own capacity of illumination than to accuse her pupil of waywardness or ignorance; but she remitted not in her attentions and her assiduities. Error, deeply rooted by long-cherished growth, cannot be weeded from the human soul by one harsh effort; vice, strengthened, by neglect or indulgence, into habit, cannot be wrenched forth by one stroke, however powerful: what madness, then, to talk of deathbed repentance

—to

—to leave to the most feeble moment of existence, the work worthy to occupy the longest life—preparation for eternity!

Three weeks had passed since Mrs. Egerton's first call at the castle: the bodily powers of the countess were rapidly declining, but her mind was gradually emerging from the clouds of error. Helena had spent a calm morning at her side, and left her composed and patient; but she had not been many hours absent, when she was hastily summoned to return. She promptly obeyed the call. As she flew towards the chamber, the alarmed looks of the domestics went sickening to her heart; but her worst fears were realized, when, upon entering the apartment of the countess, she beheld her upon her bed, writhing in the convulsion of frenzy —every limb distorted, and every feature agitated. Medical aid had in vain exerted its remedies—the malady of lady Ruthven was beyond the reach of human art. A letter which she furiously grasped in her hand

hand had produced this fearful change: it was from lord Ruthven, full of bitter invective and yet more bitter retrospection: the hand that had drawn her from virtue had struck her deathblow.

In all the wild incoherence of frantic remorse, she raved alternately on the merits of her first husband and the vices of the last, then piteously contrasted the tenderness of the one with the cruelty of the other. She then sprang from her pillow, and looking wildly around, asked for her children. The infants of lord Ruthven were brought; but, shrieking, she flung herself from their endearments—"Oh, no—not these!—my *own*, my abandoned little ones." Nature sank beneath the exquisite agony of that moment—the tenderest ties of life she had rendered her most excruciating torturers. She clasped her hands together in wild distraction, and throwing up her eyes to heaven, she murmured, in scarcely-articulated sounds—"My husband—my children!" Her lips

continued

continued to move, but the words she strove to utter were no longer audible. Her dark hair had fallen in frightful luxuriance over her shoulders, and was parted on her stony forehead; she had torn off her head-dress; every feature was blanched and sharpened by the frozen touch of death.

Mrs. Egerton bent forwards to sustain the stilled form—stilled from frantic desperation to deadly repose, from loud vociferation to unbroken silence; but, cold, motionless, and breathless, lady Ruthven's stiffened frame sank into the extended arms of the pitying Mrs. Egerton—her spirit was fled to its dread account.

CHAPTER XVII.

Woman not always useless, nor always worthless.

Mrs. Egerton was called from the contemplation of the appalling scene of lady Ruth-

ven's death, to nearer interests and dearer claims.

Mr. Egerton's passion for his favourite sport had one day led him, with his dog and his gun, to a larger circuit than usual: unhappily his young Frank was with him, though, with many entreaties, Mrs. Egerton had urged his being left behind.—"Folly! nonsense! the weakness of woman!"—The boy went: himself and his father, heated and fatigued by a long ramble, incautiously rested themselves in the shade of a thick copse; overcome by weariness, they both fell asleep, and awoke, chilled by the baleful dew of a cold autumnal evening.

Mr. Egerton, shivering and feverish, struggled many days with the insidious disease that was creeping through his frame; his young son sooner sank beneath its fatal dominion; within a week, both father and child were stretched delirious, each on their bed.

Mrs. Egerton watched, in speechless dismay,

may, the direful progress of the alarming malady: now at the side of her husband, holding his burning temples, and marking, with unutterable anguish, the fearful increase of his disorder—now bending over the emaciated countenance of her fading child, wiping the cold dew from his shrunk brow, and moistening his parched lips with cordials. The crisis of Mr. Egerton's fate was fast approaching; that of her child was sealed—he could not live. The mother heard the sentence with a bloodless cheek and tearless eye—one long, deep, heavy sigh alone indicated the oppressive weight upon her heart; she uttered no passionate, no plaintive cry, though the fixed glance of her speaking eye gave acute and mournful testimony of her exquisite though restrained suffering. The humane physician wept, as he announced the melancholy judgment; "his grief was light, and capable of tears," but he kindly strove to recall and revive her fluttering spirits.—"From the vigour of Mr. Eger-

ton's constitution, I hope, I expect much: but he will need your most active vigilance; nor must he know——" He paused.

Mrs. Egerton tried, but could not utter the implied assent and promise. She rested her cold hand upon the arm of the physician, and for a moment held her throbbing forehead; it was only for a moment —much was yet to be done. She rallied her bewildered thoughts, and slowly murmured—"You will stay with my husband till my child——" She could not proceed.

The physician understood her request, and promising compliance, entered the sick man's chamber. Mrs. Egerton watched his entrance, and then glided to the apartment of her child.

Perfectly conscious, perfectly calm, the little Frank was just asking for his mother—she approached him: his father too —Helena writhed under the torture of this demand, but commanded herself to reply to it. The dying boy begged to be placed in her arms: it was done—his little head

rested

rested on that bosom which had so often been his pillow—that bosom whence he had drawn his first nourishment—that bosom which was now to palpitate beneath his last sigh.

His mother's straining eye fell on his countenance: it no longer displayed the chubby cheek of unconscious infancy—the rosy face of wearied childhood; death had marked each lineament with his stiffening touch. The old nurse besought her mistress to let her take her place—"It is too much for you, madam."

"No—it will disturb him: I can bear it."

But we presume not, with careless hands, to unveil the sacred image of maternal woe—to note the mournful pauses of receding life—the last, long, unbroken silence; it was past—tenderness could no longer avail—fortitude could no longer succour; Mrs. Egerton sank senseless on the bed, clasping her child, even in insensibility.

The attendants, with officious kindness, revived her to animation. With her re-

collection returned the sense of the imperious duties which yet lay before her: summoning, therefore, an energy of which, in the days of ease and happiness, she would have deemed herself incapable, the mother yielded to the wife.

It was midnight, and as Mrs. Egerton, with noiseless step, approached the chamber of her husband, she heard his voice, at intervals, wildly sad. The physician unwillingly resigned his station, but he could not withstand the quiet firmness of the fortified Helena. Montague, apparently exhausted by frenzy, was sinking into stupor or sleep: he gazed wistfully upon his wife, but it was with the eye of vacancy; and taking her hand, placed it beneath his head. Helena knelt, the better to sustain his throbbing temples, whilst her other hand was firmly grasped in his. The position was favourable to the condition of her mind: short but emphatic prayers for fortitude, for patience, for resignation, burst from her full heart, but

rose

rose not to her lips. She gazed upon the pallid face before her, her busy heart whispering whom she had last sustained—whom she had lost—whom she might yet lose: the thought could only be endured for a moment; she made an effort, and changed her anticipations—whom she might yet preserve.

Three hours were passed in this situation—in this warfare of the tenderest feelings and affections. Montague breathed calmer, easier—it was not fancy, it was truth. He slowly opened his eyes; they fell on a well-known object. Smiling languidly, he feebly murmured—" My dearest Helena!"—It was the signal of sanity and recovery: she started from her posture. If existence has one moment preeminently touching, it is the moment when hope rises from the depths of despair. Mrs. Egerton had, unweeping, seen her husband languish, her child expire—unplaining watched the progress of disease, and firmly awaited its result; not one

tear, one sigh, one murmur, had escaped—her griefs seemed pent within her bosom, too mighty for the light relief of lamentation. But the piercing moment of reviving hope overmatched her constancy—she burst into tears; they were the first she had shed, and might be deemed the incense of unutterable gratitude; her heart was swollen to bursting.

Slow, yet progressive, was the convalescence of the recovering invalid. His first question was for his sick boy: Helena, shrinking behind the folds of the curtain, evaded his probing glance. He repeated the question. Her tremulous voice with difficulty articulated an equivocal reply—"He is well: do not doubt my care, think only of yourself." But the effort this caused her compelled her to retire, and give vent to her intolerable agony. In the anti-room she found Mr. Knowlesdon waiting for the expected crisis of his friend's disorder. He caught the poor trembler in his arms, and bore her to a

more

more distant apartment: there she wept uncontrolled, and in broken accents gave the history of her recent struggles. In the midst of her mournful tale she was summoned to her husband's chamber: he had missed her watchful tenderness, and had earnestly asked for her. Mr. Knowlesdon, half-blinded with his tears, caught her hand. —"You must not, shall not go, dearest Mrs. Egerton—Alas! you cannot—" But he turned to a changed being, no longer trembling, weeping, pale, but tearless, braced, firm. The magic of affection had produced the instantaneous transformation —had wound up her nerves to their wonted fortitude: a new sentiment invaded her heart—how much was to be done, and for whom?—She rose from her seat, and attempted to move across the room; but her frame yet fluttered—her tottering limbs refused to obey her will, and she was compelled to reseat herself: the body sank, though the heroic mind was energized to exertion.

Mr. Knowlesdon procured some wine, and even offered her a morsel of bread, with little hope, however, that she would accept his kindness. But Mrs. Egerton's sensibility was too genuine to require any false shews to mark its intensity; she gratefully received the needed refreshment, and arose strengthened and revived. A meek lustre beamed in her eyes—a soft glow tinged her cheek. Mr. Knowlesdon looked at her with respect heightened almost to veneration.—"And this is the being I came hither to counsel! this pious, grateful, mind-sustained mortal!"

Montague had ordered himself to be raised on pillows, and, thus propped, welcomed her approach. Her cheering presence gladdened his heart, and he tenderly pressed to his lips the hand she almost gaily offered him.—"You have been with our boy?"

"Still thinking of him, my love, and not once of me?" The effort with which this little speech was uttered may be conceived, but can never be described.

"Not

"Not think of you!—you, the guardian of my life and happiness!" exclaimed Montague, with tremulous earnestness. He was affected beyond his strength, but his wife did not lament the preponderance of a feeling that gave a new subject for his thoughts.

Day followed day, night succeeded to night—Mrs. Egerton never, but for a few moments, left the chamber of her husband, those moments devoted to bursts of affliction, wrenched from her by the unconscious remarks of the anxious father.—"Is our child better?—When may I see our boy?—That dear Frank, he will not know me again.—How I long to embrace my boy!" Such were the arrowy speeches that daily, hourly, darted through the bosom of the bereaved mother.

Mr. Knowlesdon had been admitted to the invalid once, for a few moments, at the commencement of his disorder, and had retired so overpowered by the shock

 of

of beholding his emaciated figure, and of listening to his incoherent plainings (plaints too often expressive of the tenderest parental solicitude), that it was long ere he could muster resolution to repeat the visit: yet was Mr. Knowlesdon a man of no common fortitude—of athletic frame, vigorous nerves, strong sense. After a protracted interval of refreshment from cheerier scenes, he again entered the sick man's apartment. Mrs. Egerton was in her accustomed place at the side of the invalid, unceasingly occupied in performing every office of attentive kindness—adjusting the pillows, offering the cordial, chafing the cold hand and sustaining the aching brow, whispering hope and smiling consolation—Mrs. Egerton, a feeble woman, rendered yet more feeble by watching and anxiety—her slender form made yet more slender by fatigue and abstinence—with no interruptions but those of deepened affliction, no change of scene to revive, no retro-

spections

spections to gladden—herself the most interested in the present misery, in the apprehended catastrophe.

Mr. Knowlesdon watched, in mute admiration, the incessant, the noiseless labours of the unconscious Helena—the recollection and promptitude of her numerous arrangements for her husband's comfort: his applauding reverie was closed by the soft tones of her voice, as, kneeling at the feet of Montague, she looked up to ask, whether she had rightly adjusted his footstool?—Her dress was negligent; her beauty was faded—no rose blushed on her cheek, no cherry glowed on her lips, no sparkle irradiated her eye—sickness and gloom surrounded her figure, and sorrow and languor marked every movement; yet never, in the season of brightest loveliness, in every embellishment of graceful attire—never, in the midst of festivity and elegance—never had she appeared so attractive, so respectable: Mr. Knowlesdon felt, in one moment, the full worth of woman.

The

The little Montague, in the meantime, had crept through the half-open door, and before he was discovered, had reached the elbow of his father. Mr. Egerton smiled upon his boy, and fondly embraced him: it was the first time they had met. Mrs. Egerton sprang from her knees, dreading what the artless child might disclose; but she strove in vain to remove him, and waited, in breathless expectation, the result. Mr. Knowlesdon, equally aware of the evil to be apprehended, had less power to avert its occurrence. Many were the inquiries of the tender father—too soon the dreaded question was demanded—"And now, Montague, what can you tell me of our dear Frank?"

"Did you not know?—Oh! he is in heaven."

In vain Mr. Knowlesdon stammered out some inarticulated words, in vain Helena instantly removed the little prattler from the unnerved grasp of Egerton—the blow was given—Mr. Egerton fainted.

The

The alarmed solicitor was incapable of yielding him any assistance. Again the woman was called to act, when manly nature failed. How often is it so!—Helena flew for the cordial, moistened the white lips and bathed the marble temples of the senseless Montague, held his head on her bosom, and threw her trembling arms around his frame. He breathed—looked up; but the shock had been too severe—he was conveyed to his bed, sunk into a fearful relapse from health and sanity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Scandalous Scandal.

Leaving Mrs. Egerton engrossed with freshened alarms, we will just take a peep at the internal economy of Random Hall: it seems indeed a very long time since we looked in upon our good friends, the Wrongheads.

Wrongheads. Sir Gabriel was again seated in his elbow-chair, by the dining-room fire—his lady but half revived to the pleasing *cares* of life. No one, indeed, could be more skilful in that kind of mental alchymy which transmutes differing feelings into one: unhappily indeed, unlike the alchymists of the sublime branch of chemistry, who change, or seek to change, the baser metals to the purest—to sterling gold, lady Wronghead busied herself to transform the pleasantest emotions into those least agreeable, and most successfully made every thing a care and a plague, which less ingenious folk would have accepted in its original form of pleasure or comfort. But all lesser troubles were now swallowed up in what she called her "late severe affliction;" for where sorrow has pressed with a light touch, where uninterrupted happiness has been long possessed (we do not boldly say, enjoyed), small pains are deemed afflictions. Lady Wronghead was now accommodated with

a most

a most plausible reason for sighs and gloomy looks, and she resolved, by husbanding her treasure, to make it last as long as possible: acknowledged mistress of one evil, she very magnanimously shut her eyes to multiplied surrounding blessings; she calculated as nothing (at least so we infer from her conduct) the health and society of the half-dozen children yet gracing her board; but, dead to peace and consolation, amused herself with every form of regret for the absence of the ungracious self-banished child, whose presence, when possessed, had been just as unprized as that of any boy or girl now overlooked. Now this we call the true science of womanly self-tormenting.

Miss Patty Muddleton, seated by the side of sir Gabriel, was refreshing her learned memory with the Beauties of History—the grand storehouse of all her erudition; and as she perseveringly read the anecdotes in the alphabetical order in which they were arranged, her *small* mistakes

takes of dates, names, and places, were more than excusable—were inevitable. People cannot be blamed for what they cannot avoid—a pithy little apology, ready for almost all kind of deficiencies and misdemeanors, and we expect to be immortalized for suggesting it; we only hope no blunt critic will intimate the propriety of accurately establishing beforehand, what is and what is not inevitable.

Jack and his brother were engaged in rather a warm debate on the recent elopement: from words they almost came to blows, for Adam Wronghead, Esq. warmly advocating the fair fugitive, Jack's choler instantly rose; the heir talked something about kicking a jackanapes down stairs, and Jack about throwing puppies out of the window. Both arms seemed about to confirm threats with deeds, when the astonished sir Gabriel hastily interposed.—"What the devil are you thinking about, Timothy?"

Timothy, nowise charmed with the appellation,

pellation, began a long and elaborate discussion about the provocation Jack had given him—the stubbornness of Jack—the rudeness of Jack—how disrespectfully Jack spoke, and how unwisely Jack argued; in short, it was very plain that Jack alone was to blame, and that Adam Wronghead, Esq. was the most unoffending, sinless, immaculate being in the whole world.

Sir Gabriel next turned to the offender, who, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, was rocking the chair on whose back he leant.—"Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

Great was the amazement of the circle at his answer: "Nothing—I have been very much in fault."

Miss Patty put down her book—it contained nothing so marvellous as this sentence of her nephew's. To acknowledge error and not impute blame—to yield to conviction, and, above all, express that conviction without making one solitary

effort

effort to implicate another—it was an act of unprecedented heroism. Out came Miss Patty's pocket-book to receive the precious memorandum. What a charming insertion for the next edition of the Amiable Seduction!—just fit for a novel! for who would believe it was true? nay, who would believe it was possible?

Sir Gabriel felt disposed, like the hero of story, to bid the guiltless quit the society of the guilty, and to warn Adam Wronghead, Esq. no longer to house it with the criminal Jack; but Jack holding out his hand to his brother, with, "Come, Tim, let us be friends," settled the matter. Tim sullenly acceded, and Jack, vehemently swearing he would never put himself into a passion again, kicked Fidele out of the room for running against his legs—flung his aunt's book into the fire, because it incommoded his elbow, and then nearly threw out all the blazing fuel in poking it out again. A very quiet look from his father made him recollect himself, and

laughing

laughing heartily at his ridiculous vow and more ridiculous violence, he began jumping Sam head over heels.

Sir Gabriel profited by the first moment of comparative stillness, to read aloud a paragraph from the paper in his hand—the public notification of "the death of the lovely, the accomplished, the amiable Anne, countess of Ruthven."

The name roused the tattling propensities of Miss Muddleton, who, after a very long and cruel silence of seven minutes and a half, was panting to give exercise to her vocal talents.—"Oh, my poor dear friend! my dear lady Ruthven!—she was seduced quite to an atomy!"

"How do you know that?" asked the baronet—"you never saw her after the rascally earl's rascally abandonment."

Miss Patty was not fond of hearing a lord called bad names, she therefore meekly replied—"You are very hard, brother, upon my lord; a Christian ought to be more pitiful."

"Ay,

"Ay, to misfortune—to repentance—but not to guilt."

"Well, my dear sir Gabriel, I will not *controvert* the matter with you." (Sir Gabriel laughed).—"I would have called upon the *abandoned* countess," (again sir Gabriel laughed), "but my feelings could not sustain the inflicting sight."

"Whew!" cried sir Gabriel, laughing yet more unconstrainedly: "what kind of sensibility is that, sister Patty, that makes us shun our friends in their distress?—There's Mrs. Egerton now——"

"Who's no better than she should be, depend upon it," briskly interposed Miss Patty: "she knows, by experience, how to feel for a stray sheep—an intermeddling busy-body!"

"Who is uncharitable now, I wonder?" quoth the baronet.

"Why, really some people are so provoking!—treating *me* in such an *incivil, inpolite* way!" quoth the spinster.

"Right, sister Patty—'tis indeed as people

people treat *meum*, that we call them good or bad."

"Such vast piety indeed!" continued the spinster: "why, I hear she preached three sermons every day to poor dear lady Ruthven; and she was in the middle of one when my lamented friend, the countess, died; and she would persist in finishing it, though the breath was out of the body."

"Oh, wicked Mrs. Egerton! ignorant Mrs. Egerton! to expect the dead would bear counsel, when the living will not!" said the baronet archly.

"Then going to the house at such a calamitous period, just to triumph over misfortune!"

"Why, that's true; but not having your exquisite sensibility, Mrs. Egerton might foolishly fancy that active benevolence was more useful to the sufferer than secret sighs and lamentations, such as you, my good Patty, doubtless, bountifully bestowed."

Here

Here Miss Patty produced numberless sighs, moans, and twinklings of the eyes, that might very well pass for tears, as assuredly they often have done; and then, in a sobbing voice, continued her harangue. —" Oh, brother! true sceptibility can never be mistaken—it feeds on sorrow and dotes upon grief. I am sure, the day I heard of my poor dear lady Ruthven's *disease*, I never tasted scarce no food from morning till night."

" Except breakfast, dinner, tea, supper, and a good hot lunch," murmured the baronet.

" Whereas, I hear Mrs. Egerton sat down and made a hearty supper on beef or ham, I forget which, the night her child died, and her husband was dying."

There is sometimes a very curious display of affected accuracy in falsehood. How delicate in Miss Patty not to positively assert whether it was beef or ham, at the moment she could positively assert what was not true!

" And

"And then her leaving the dear child to the care of servants!—How could a mother be so unnatural?"

"Nay," interposed lady Wronghead, "I think it was much worse, her quitting her husband when he was delirious."

"In either case, she was wrong; at all events, you have proved her faulty," observed the baronet.

"Oh, if I had a dying child!" sighed out the maiden.

"There is no great hardship in tending the sick," said lady Wronghead—"I am sure I could, night and day, watch a poor dying friend."

"Have you heard of Rachael to-day?" said sir Gabriel, with a certain tone, which caused his consort to change the subject.

"I wonder how the child came to die: some people are so apt to lose their children!—I don't know how it is, but I never lost one."

"For which give, but do not take praise," said the baronet, in an impressive manner.

The chariot driving to the door, to convey the ladies into the village, prevented further conversation on this most interesting topic; but in a very few days it was renewed, a remark of the baronet's bringing into yet fuller display the benevolent propensities of his two fair associates.—"My brother tells me, he fears Mr. Egerton will not recover this second severe attack, and that Mrs. Egerton is nearly distracted."

"No wonder she is abstracted," said Miss Patty, looking unutterable things—"I knew something would come out—I was sure of it."

"And, pray, what has come out?" asked sir Gabriel.

"I suppose," continued the gentle spinster, "I suppose you know that the nobleman—the lord What's-his-name—the lord Melmoth, is again at Rosebay?"

"I know nothing about the matter."

"Well, here he is, and here he has been some days, and here he is likely to remain some

some time *incog.* as the *French* say: the carriage upset with him and another gentleman as was with him, just as they dashed into the village, and the lord, as he calls himself, got his arm broken."

"The devil a word of the business have I heard before."

"Oh, very likely not—indeed, how should you? for the affair was all hushed up; Mrs. Egerton almost down upon her knees to the surgeon to keep the secret."

"Why the devil should it be a secret?"

"Ay, that is the question!—And why should Mrs. Egerton care about it? and why should Mrs. Egerton steal away, at all hours, to the Black Swan, and hang round the neck of the stranger, and kiss him, and cry? and why should Mrs. Egerton——"

"It is all a d——d fabrication," interposed sir Gabriel.

"My dear sir, I had it from the most *dubitable* authority."

"Likely, likely!" murmured Jack.

The damsel, well pleased, proceeded in her narration.—"Why should Mrs. Egerton leave one dying husband—I mean a dying husband, to go to another—to a friend, and caress both, as if both were so wonderfully dear to her?—I always do suspect those very virtuous ladies—those sentimental, charitable, forgiving souls!"

"If virtue, if charity, if forgiveness of error, are crimes, the Lord have mercy upon us!" said the baronet.

But Susan Knowlesdon was now announced, and Miss Patty exulted in having testimony, respectable testimony, for the truth of her words. Why she was aware her own asseveration went for nothing—why she propped her own declaration upon the evidence of a young and giddy girl, let those pronounce who deal in exaggeration, and intentionally make mountains of molehills.

Poor Susan, though doting upon secrets, had little skill in concealing them; in two minutes, therefore, the party discovered

covered that she had a secret, and that it concerned Mrs. Egerton. Miss Patty instantly commenced a brisk cross-questioning, subject, however, to the watchful gallantry of Jack, who, somehow or another, was always interested in whatever related to the comfort of pretty Susan Knowlesdon.—"Sad goings on at the abbey, my dear Susan!"

"Sad indeed, ma'am!—My uncle fears poor Mr. Egerton will not live long."

"Ah! it will be a happy release, all things considered."

"Dear me, ma'am, pray don't say so. What would become of poor dear Mrs. Egerton?"

"She has other consolers, you know—the broken-armed lord What-do-you-call-him?"

Susan blushed rosy red, and Jack would have checked the rudeness that caused the bright suffusion—but it made his Susan look *so* lovely!

"Now, my dear Susan, is there not a lord at the Swan?"

"Very likely, ma'am."

"And, my dear, is he not a friend of Mrs. Egerton's?"

"Very likely, ma'am."

"And does not Mrs. Egerton visit him at all hours—morning, noon, and night?"

"Very likely, ma'am."

A rushing tear-drop moistened the blue eye of the agitated Susan, and the bloom on her cheek heightened from the rose to the carnation. Jack's admiration was overwhelmed by his pity, and he rudely bade his aunt ask no more questions. Now this was an utter impossibility: a curious* lady, on the brink of having her curiosity gratified, to stop short at the moment preceding illumination!—It was madness to ask it—greater madness to expect it; for, besides the fair spinster, lady Wronghead, Adam Wronghead, Esq. and the young misses Wronghead, were all dying to hear.

Jack

* It was not necessary for us to put this expletive. Are not *all* the daughters of Eve curious?—What say the sons of Adam?

Jack accordingly received a pretty sharp reprimand from his mamma, and Miss Patty triumphantly proceeded.—"You know, my dear Susan, we are all your fast friends, and would not, upon no account, repeat one syllabub you said—at least I can answer for myself, I am sure."

Sir Gabriel gave a loud hem.

"So, my dear Susan, as I was saying, you are among friends and relatives, as one may say, and you might just tell us something of the partiklors."

"Indeed, ma'am, I have nothing to tell."

"Fie, my dear!—so young and yet so cunning!"

"So young and yet so discreet!" cried the enraptured Jack.

"Young! cunning!" murmured sir Gabriel—"You are right, Patty: young maidens should leave cunning for old maidens, and stick to simple truth."

Miss Patty saw nor here nor there, but pushed right onward to her mark.—"My dear Susan, did not Mrs. Egerton sit up

all night with the strange lord? and does he not continually embrace her, and call her his long-lost Helena—his dear-beloved recovered Helena?"

Susan burst into tears, and Jack sending all the old maids in creation to the devil, set about consoling the weeping fair with his tenderest rhetoric; and as he watched the big tears that coursed each other down the rosy cheek of the agitated girl, how much did he envy the snowy pocket-handkerchief that wiped away the pearly dew!

"The other gentleman, too?" continued the indefatigable Miss Patty—"he who calls himself *now* proud to be her father?"

Susan sobbed aloud.

"I suppose *he* is her father?"

"I believe so, ma'am."

"And the other?"

"Oh, I am telling every thing," exclaimed Susan.

"Who is that other, Susan?"

"I will answer no more questions," said Susan,

Susan, with a firmness which made Jack long to hug her to his heart. But she had already said enough—many eloquent looks passed from Miss Patty to her sister, and the young misses Wronghead to their brother.

Mr. Knowlesdon called, just as Susan had dried her eyes, and by her entreaties had procured a silence, which only tended to heighten the mystery. The solicitor looked unusually serious, and on sir Gabriel's hazarding a question respecting the Egertons, he sighed, and said it was a sad, a very sad affair.

"I hear the child died from sheer neglect," said lady Wronghead.

"Oh, if they would have called in proper advice in time, they would have saved him," quoth the spinster.

"But Mrs. Egerton left him entirely to servants," proceeded lady Wronghead.

"And so now she will save neither husband nor child," murmured the maiden.

"Heavens and earth!" exclaimed the

solicitor, vehemently—"to see what I have seen—hear what I hear!" But recovering himself, he calmly added—"Ladies, in *one* thing you are mistaken—the only thing perhaps in which proof can be brought against you: the boy is not dead—he lives, to reward his mother's tenderness and confound your groundless assertions. He had indeed fainted, but, I thank Heaven, revived, and is now out of all danger."

The company looked upon each other, and were silent.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Scene.

Miss Patty inquired with scrupulous exactness into the truth of the lawyer's information. With a noble disdain of facts, she was not so apt to ascertain the verity of

of the little histories she herself chose to detail, and was a good deal surprised, in the present instance, to find the solicitor had spoken the truth, and nothing but the truth. The little Frank had fallen into one of those swoonings so common in acute diseases, and which the tenacity of life, so peculiar to childhood, had enabled him to outlive: but as his life continued in imminent peril, the old nurse and Mr. Knowlesdon deemed it best to preserve from the knowledge of Mrs. Egerton the feeble glimmering of hope, which might but have lighted her to a severer depth of despair.

Mrs. Mary was secretly ushered to the chamber of the sick boy, and by her cares nourished this reviving spark of life, till it strengthened into the vigorous flame of healthy existence.

Helena, absorbed by her husband's afflicting situation, was easily prevailed upon to resign herself wholly to his chamber, nor enervate her heart by the view of him who she believed was placed beyond

the reach of her tenderness. Mr. Knowlesdon, as we have seen, tried to remedy the artless speech of the young Montague, but his explanation came too late to save Mr. Egerton from its shock; though on the broken heart of the afflicted mother it burst like a light from heaven—illuminating—gladdening—invigorating. Oh, who can speak the exquisite joy of hope, when it rushes on a bosom long shut up in despair! Let not humanity lament its sorrows, since from them often springs its most intense felicity, like the fabled bird, that breaks into brilliant life from the ashes of dissolution.

A week elapsed, and curiosity was wound up to its highest pitch: Miss Patty had discovered, indeed, that the young Frank was rapidly recovering his strength and his bloom; but of Mr. Egerton's fate she knew nothing, and of the lord at the Black Swan she had heard little.

Just at this time the family of the Wrongheads were enlivened by the advertisement

tisement for a public show in the great room at the identical Black Swan; there was now not only a chance of amusement, but also a prospect of fathoming the so-long-undeveloped mystery. Miss Patty, to be sure, had not been idle: through her nephew, Adam Wronghead, Esq. she had ascertained that a lord Melmoth was at the inn, and also that he was the identical personage whom Mr. and Mrs. Egerton had so strangely encountered in the park. The little anecdote, so extensively promulgated, respecting the earlier title of the lady, well agreed with the stranger's name. Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, when directly or indirectly asked, had never denied the visits of Helena to the earl, nor his tender greetings of the wife of Mr. Egerton: Mr. Leech, the surgeon, and the whole tribe of Abbey menials, had been brought to confess the strong injunctions laid upon them, not to divulge to Mr. Egerton the close vicinage of the noble stranger; and Helena, with trembling earnestness, had

prayed

prayed to have her nocturnal visits to the inn kept a profound secret from her husband. This implored secrecy, and the awkward hour at which the lady sought the gentleman, gave spirit and interest to the hopeful mystery.

Matters were in this desirable state when the Wrongheads arrived at the Swan, to partake, with the nobility and gentry of the village, the entertainments of the advertised juggler's wonderful tricks. The exhibitor soon attracted every eye, by his ingenious sleights, all but the watchful eyes and ears of the vigilant Miss Patty Muddleton—far other sounds, far other sights absorbed her senses. With great skill had she chosen her seat—her back against the only window looking up the only street of the village, her face exactly opposite to the only door the apartment boasted; this door she desired to have kept open, for the refreshing draught of air it admitted, and for the yet more refreshing view it bestowed, of the entrance into the

room

room on the other side of the narrow passage.

By a few adroit questions, the lady had gained unquestionable information, that Mrs. Egerton was at that moment in the house, in the very room Miss Patty's eye commanded—was alone with lord Melmoth. This valuable news she soon divulged to the Wronghead coterie. Sir Gabriel struck his amber-headed cane to the ground with violence, and began gnawing its top, in doughty mood; lady Wronghead blessed herself—"Who could have thought it!" Miss Patty held up her head with more than wonted self-complacence, as if her excellence shone brighter by the comparison with a frailer fair. Adam Wronghead, Esq. preserved his equanimity, careless who suffered or who was censured, if it was not himself. Jack had not been deemed worthy of the confidential whispers of his dear aunt, and was very happy, knotting the cordon of Susan's pelisse into a hundred and fifty knots; in short,

short, entangling it just as much as his heart-strings were entangled by its fair wearer.

A rolling of distant wheels was now heard by the attentive Miss Patty: she briskly turned, to look up the street, when (oh, reader, guess the horror of her feelings!) she beheld the chariot of Mr. Egerton slowly approach, and his emaciated figure occupying one of its corners. The spinster was resolved to keep every wonder to herself, until she could burst upon the company in all the glorious terror of overwhelming facts. The chariot drew up to the Swan, and stopped; Mr. Egerton slowly alighted: he trembled, and looked pale, with what Miss Patty deemed the agitation of suppressed jealousy and brooding revenge. Here was a fine opportunity for a "scene," and a scene the damsel was resolved to have, especially as at that moment she caught a glimpse of the solicitor hovering about the passage. Filling her head, therefore, with "hydras, gorgons,

and

and chimeras dire," and mustering up as much agitation as the nature of the exploit required, she rose, and tottered to the door.

Mr. Egerton had ascended the stairs, and with a look and mien of the most profound perturbation, was approaching the opposite door. Mr. Knowlesdon had suddenly disappeared, and the maiden began to think it no longer so desirable to exhibit her "sceptibility;" but as he might be within hearing, though beyond sight, she firmly pursued her design.

Montague stood for a moment, leaning on the balustrade of the staircase; he trembled, and a deep glow displaced the ghastly paleness of his countenance. Miss Patty had some thoughts of approaching to offer her assistance, but was withheld by the dread of being drawn in to be a sharer in the honours of which she preferred being only a spectator.

Mr. Egerton, as if perfectly unconscious of the presence of any human being, seemed, by a sudden effort, to rouse himself; he

he sprang forwards, and seized the lock of the door; it yielded to his touch, and he rushed into the room.

This was the exact moment for a fit; and luckily the solicitor appearing at the same instant, her elegant swoon would have a spectator—and such a spectator! No time was to be lost; Miss Patty shrieked, and threw herself into the arms of the amazed solicitor. Her repeated screams called out the whole of the family party. Miss Patty, in all the convulsion of delirium, clung to the bewildered bachelor—What was to be done? In vain lady Wronghead essayed to unclasp the hand of the grasping maiden—it would have been easier to have torn the ivy from its wedded elm. The solicitor longed to try his infallible remedy for hysteric ladies—putting them into a room by themselves, and Jack said something of the restorative powers of a tub of cold water.

Whether the bare sound of this last recipe was of itself efficacious, or whether the lady

lady was in an uncomfortable position, and desired to change it, or whether she thought she had been long enough insensible, we know not, but the flutterings suddenly stopped—the lady sighed, opened her eyes, looked up, beheld whom she grasped, blushed, and sank again into the arms of the petrified bachelor.

"What is the meaning of all this bustle, sister Patty?"

This ungracious address of the unfeeling baronet roused her from her sweet delirium; and, as if at once restored to all the horrors of the scene—horrors forgotten in the whirl of tenderer emotions, she wildly clasped her hands together, screamed aloud, and seizing the arm of the poor persecuted lawyer, implored him—"For friendship—for mercy's sake—to prevent the *infusion* of blood*shed*."

He was perfectly at a loss to understand her meaning; the lady, therefore, passed through every action of incoherent despair: she cried—she knelt—she groaned—she moaned;

moaned; then rapidly exclaimed, "There, there—in that room. Oh, save them! save them!"

"In the name of common sense, what do you mean, Miss Patty Muddleton?" said the irritated and harassed solicitor.

"Your friend—your deceived, your injured friend!" An hysteric laugh naturally finished this sentimental exhibition.

The collected group now hastily pressed towards the apartment, from which, however, Mr. Knowlesdon seemed earnestly bent to exclude them; but Miss Patty continuing to make many and strange exclamations of blood, murder, daggers, and pistols, universal curiosity was aroused; and the intrepid maiden, seeing no one was hardy enough to open the fatal door, rushed forwards, and opened it herself. Heavens! what a scene!—Helena in the arms of lord Melmoth!

Miss Patty very gracefully staggered to a chair, upon which she sank, mournfully murmuring—"Exactly as I predicated."

Helena

Helena was indeed in the enfolding arms of lord Melmoth, and Egerton, pale and agitated, was speaking with extreme earnestness to the other stranger; but no signs of blood, murder, daggers, and pistols, refreshed the searching eyes of the intruding spinster.

Mr. Knowlesdon now stalked into the room, and closing the door upon the assembled crowd, somewhat uncivilly addressed the fainting damsel—"This may be all very entertaining to you, Miss Patty Muddleton, but I must request you will instantly retire from this apartment."

Helena, quitting the affectionate embrace of lord Melmoth, without blushes or confusion, (how shameless is guilt!) begged, in soft tones, to know the cause of Miss Muddleton's distress?

"It is some unhappy mad woman; pray, lady Helena, do not approach her," said the stranger gentleman.

Miss Patty shuddered at this confirmation of her worst forebodings.

"My

"My dearest Helena!" exclaimed lord Melmoth, in the sweetest tone of love.

"Nay, my dear lord, I must assist this lady," replied Helena.

"Pray let her alone, dear lady Helena Melmoth," said the solicitor, in a clear and audible voice: "Miss Muddleton is very subject to these fits, and has luckily one unfailing remedy."

"Name it—let me procure it," said Helena, earnestly.

"She must be removed into a lonely chamber; solitude and cold water are infallible cures for her disorder."

Miss Patty had by this time seen as much as she desired of the scene going on in this room, and was now quite as eager to retire as she had before been to enter. Brimful of news, she arose to leave the contaminating spot, but found it necessary to entreat the arm of the lawyer to sustain her tottering steps.

It is highly unwise, and uninteresting, and

and unbecoming, for fainting hysterical ladies to get too soon well; not to say any thing of the loss of all the pretty appendages of languor, feebleness, soft voice, soft looks, so easily introduced, as marking the several stages of gradual convalescence. Behold, then, Miss Patty emerging from the fatal chamber with trembling steps, and resting her agitated frame on the arm of the solemn lawyer; lady Wrong-head receiving her from her sullen supporter, and leading her into an adjoining apartment: there Miss Patty, after a certain number of sagacious looks and nods, bodeful sighs and exclamations, unbosomed her hoarded secrets.—It was all very authentic: Mrs. Egerton was certainly lady Melmoth, the acknowledged, the announced wife of lord Melmoth—his dearest Helena. Shameless, unfeeling, wicked woman! Mr. Egerton, poor man! how horrorstruck he looked! it was as much as the other gentleman could do to keep him from sinking into the earth; but he seemed

seemed to have resigned her to her rightful spouse—no doubt the struggle had caused his late severe illness. It was a cruel fate—good-for-nothing woman!

Here Miss Patty wished to introduce a passionate burst of tears, but the thing could not be effected, so she popped her head into her cambric handkerchief and sobbed very loud, and it answered just as well.

At this climax the solicitor calmly walked into the room, having, till then, been employed in dispersing the crowd collected by Miss Patty's cries and direful exclamations.

"Well, and so, after all, brother," said sir Gabriel, "Mrs. Egerton proves to be lady Melmoth."

"Yes; and I never was so happy in my life."

The good folk all stared.

"Happy! What do you mean?" inquired the baronet, after a short pause.

"Can I be otherwise, when I behold my

my friend reconciled to his father, and his beloved Helena restored to hers?"

"Then lord Melmoth," said Miss Patty—

"Is lady Helena Melmoth's most honourable father."

CHAPTER XX.

The Conclusion, where every thing is concluded.

GREAT as was the astonishment of Miss Muddleton and the Wrongheads, we do not think our readers will be much surprised by the eclaircissement given in the last chapter. Nothing, indeed, but the perverse spirit of misconception could have imagined any other *finale* than the one here described; and we only fear our readers will censure us for the simplicity of our *denouement*. We are indeed perfectly aware of the deficiency of the marvellous

in our story; but for this defect, we throw ourselves upon the mercy of our readers.

Our work is indeed nothing more than a simple artless sketch—an attempt to shew the importance of the lesser virtues to the dignity and the felicity of domestic life—an endeavour to prove that these virtues are as necessary as they are attainable to every rank.

But wherefore did the artless Helena resign her title, and seek retirement? On this point we could write a long story; but we have been told by an excellent critic, that after the *denouement* of a tale or a drama, be it simple or complicated, is once given, the sooner the piece concludes the better. In respect to this advice, we will therefore state facts very briefly.

Colonel Melmoth, the father of Montague Egerton Melmoth, had earnestly desired to unite this his only son to the only child of his brother, lord Melmoth: by this marriage the wealth and the title of the family

family would be united, since Montague was heir to the earldom. The young man had no objection to the arrangement; his cousin was pretty, docile, and sprightly, and his heart was free.

The parties were affianced in due form; but as it required some months to complete the necessary legal settlements, it happened that in the interval both the young people were introduced to beings whom each deemed more worthy of selection. Helena, rational and upright, nipped in its first bud the growing predilection. The gallant Lothario who had caught her fancy, flattered, sued, raved in vain; she was inflexible, and calmly and steadily repelled his slightest overtures. Happy was it for her that she did so, since this gay and handsome lover was, in fact, a vain and selfish coxcomb, who, marrying shortly after, by cruelty and moroseness broke the heart of a doting wife. How the amiable and sensible Helena should have so unwisely loved, is but fresh evi-

dence of the blind credulity of youthful love, and one proof to be added to ten thousand more, that seventeen is a bad age for sober judgment, and that, of those who marry on the unadvised preference and rash enthusiasm of that misguiding age, few, if any, escape some form of misery and repentance.

Montague had, in his turn, been caught by the pensive but artful graces of the dearest friend of his betrothed—Augusta Beverly, as finished a coquette as ever figured in the scenes of fashion. She saw the impression she had made, and generously strove by every art to confirm it—not that she cared for her handsome adorer, for her eye was fixed on high, upon a ducal coronet; but he increased the number of her flatterers.

Montague risked a remonstrance with his father on the subject; but the choleric old gentleman so peremptorily commanded his fidelity to his first vows, that the conference was never renewed.

Young

Young Melmoth married his cousin; but her becoming his wife did not, as all wives know, by any means increase her attractions, or enlarge her influence; the artful Augusta more sweetly smiled and more sweetly sighed, and her captive's chains were firmer rivetted. Just as the debts of honour are preferably paid before the debts of honesty, Montague loved where to love was elective. His attentions at length drew notice and reprobation: Helena alone was unconscious to the treachery of her friend and the neglect of her husband, simply because she was incapable of either; she deemed too humbly of herself, to wonder at her husband's coldness—too highly of her friend, to marvel at her share of homage: but though she had not sought to gain the lover, she sought to retain the husband*, and by every tender duty strove to woo his affection. But her father, her uncle, were out-

 rageously

* Just *vice versa* to the most general and approved system.

rageously indignant; and after many severe remonstrances—many harsh threats, that seemed but to prolong the stubbornness of the wayward Montague, they conjointly stopped his pecuniary resources.

Montague's was a spirit that could have been subdued by kindness, but was inflexible to severity; he gave up his town-house and splendid equipage, and conformed his expenditure to his income. His mother's dowry was now all the wealth that he could call his own; in London it would procure a bare subsistence, but in the country it would admit of comfort: to the country therefore he retired, directed to Thurleston by his attachment to his college tutor, Mr. Knowlesdon. He gave, however, to his wife the choice of remaining with her father in wealth and splendor. This Helena firmly declined.

At Mr. Knowlesdon's instigation, the young couple resigned the surname of their family, and the honorary title borne by the daughter of an earl.—"You will there-

by

by be less noticed—less scrutinized, and may more easily arrange a limited expenditure," said the good solicitor.

Mr. Egerton had not been many months in his retirement, ere the public papers announced the marriage of Miss Beverly with the young duke of ——, and learnt from Helena, who till then had faithfully kept the secret, that Augusta had been long engaged to his grace, even when she smiled sweetest on the infatuated Montague.

Lord Melmoth had essayed, by every means in his power, to recover his amiable daughter from her ignoble seclusion; by many letters—by even personal interference: but she talked of her children and her vows! and, unluckily for the earl, she did not, like *some* of her sex, only talk—she acted.

The dangerous illness of Montague, announced by Mr. Knowlesdon to the brothers, brought them instantly to Thurleston; but the almost-expiring invalid was

in no state to bear the shock of the meeting, and the very knowledge of their vicinity would have been a fearful risk.

As he revived, so seemed to revive the displeasure of the two indignant fathers; and it needed all the eloquence of Helena and the respectful proffer of making the first advance of the faded Montague, to pave the way for a reconciliation. His languid and emaciated appearance completed the triumph of parental love: the moment we fear to lose, we begin to feel the worth of what we have spurned.

Helena was rapturously enfolded to the hearts her virtues had united; and need we add, that the woman who was happy, respectable, and useful in mediocrity, was more eminently so in more splendid fortunes?

But what was the fate of the rest of our *dramatis personæ*?—of our interesting, though not lovely—and, ah! not beloved heroine, Miss Patty Muddleton? Why truly, she remained Miss Patty Muddle-

ton

ton to a good old age, when, falling a hapless victim to the sharp arrows of the sly little god, she yielded her virgin hand and accumulated fortunes to a dashing youth, whose years were marked by the same figures as the blushing bride—rather differently disposed indeed, the gallant bridegroom writing them thus, 27—the timid maid thus, 72. He, however, swore he would love her eternally, and left her in the honey-moon! But the Hall again opened its ever-hospitable door, and, strange to say! its master welcomed, with almost warmer kindness, the pennyless forsaken wanderer, than thirty years before he had received the wealthy co-heiress. No change was ever perceptible in her wardrobe or her purse—her treatment alone was changed; for sir Gabriel ceased to laugh at her erudition, and Jack became respectful and forbearing.

Another fugitive was also sheltered there—the pale spectre of the blooming Clementina, now a plaining widow—not

plaining that she was a widow, but that she had ever been a wife. Ten years of varied misery had taught her what it was to be the associate of a man of "pleasure;" to be stinted of necessaries, that he might indulge in superfluities; with clothes too mean to enter society, yet without resources to render home desirable; for of all her accomplishments, not one could charm away the sense of forlorn abandonment. One simple taste—the love of reading or the love of needlework, had been worth them all.

Nor was real misery wanting to give weight to the harassing vexations of domestic tribulation. Two puny infants, born infirm, and withering beneath mistaken indulgence, mingled with the total absence of every salutary aid of wholesome food and clothing, were in turn consigned to the grave.

The habits of intoxication that had long transformed the man into something below the brute, led to a quarrel, which prematurely

turely and disgracefully closed the career of the tyrannical husband. Mrs. Williams, with a mind enervated by oppression—with a body enfeebled by sickness and enforced abstinence—with spirits irritated into the most deplorable irascibility, knew not where to find a shelter for her houseless head, till the father she had deceived, the mother she had abandoned, the home she had deserted, again received the repentant fugitive. The affection that sheltered her petulant childhood again sheltered her yet more petulant old age—for she was old in sufferings, though not in years.

Miss Julia Josephina Wronghead, profiting by her sister's folly, turned off her favourite swain, the spruce son of a neighbouring squire, a youth formed like his father for hard-drinking and extravagance—two very genteel propensities certainly, but such as Mrs. Williams, with swollen eyes, pronounced little friendly to connubial happiness or connubial dignity. In good

good time, and by the advice of her father, Josephina condescended to become the happy and respectable wife of the widowed curate. Yes, though he was not her first love—though he was not fashionable—though he had been married before—though he had a son to inherit his patrimonial estate—and, worse than all, though he had been refused by Susan Knowlesdon.

And here, perhaps, our readers will start as much as did the bride, when the honest bridegroom mentioned, as a well-known fact, what was quite new to her—for how could the simple man suppose that Susan had not told the delicious secret to all her friends and intimates—had not disclosed her triumph over a generous heart, and laughed, with all her associates, at the trusting confidence that was willing to repose all future peace and future honour in the bosom of the selected fair? Surely nothing can be more worthy ridicule than the confiding mortal who tells his tale of

love

love into the ear of favoured woman, and makes her the arbitress of his after destiny.

We say nothing of that good-humoured complaisance, and genteel courtesy, which draws on a lover to "pop the question," only to have the honourable pleasure of disappointing hopes such demeanour has first awakened; nor do we dare to assert that, five times out of six, such refusals, though numbered as honours, are, in fact, a disgrace; for would not a noble mind scorn to trifle with the feelings of another, merely in the selfish scheme of aggrandizing vanity and consequence? or can that be called an honour, which is acquired by stratagem and deceitful manners?

How Susan fell into the error of encouraging into a lover the man she never intended to accept for a husband, we know not—nay, perhaps the gentleman was one of those who was wilfully blind to discouragement, or premature in proposing—for there are such; but, even supposing the lady had been to blame in the first instance,

stance, she made the *amende honorable* in the second, for except to her aunt, "she never told *his* love." Of her own little secrets she was not unconfiding, but this she called the secret of another—a secret whose developement was as dishonourable as it was unjust: not even by a word or look did she disclose the triumph of vanity—never turned scornfully from the discomfited curate when he addressed her—affected no airs of pity or of disdain, but felt, what every woman ought to feel, obliged by the proffer of the heart and hand of a respectable man.

This conduct was of no further use than changing the lover into the friend—turning affection into profound esteem; something rather better than rousing enmity and awakening contempt. Where pretty Susan learnt this odd rule of behaviour we cannot tell, unless it was from that genuine old maid, Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon, who, we have been told, might have been half-a-score times a bride, had she so pleased;

ed; but in the grave of an affianced husband all her hymeneal vows were for ever buried—pure evidence of the fidelity of woman's warm and unchangeable love!

We shall not unfold how we heard the number of her suitors, for neither word, look, nor act, of the lady's, pointed them out to the eye of observation—nay, we have been told, to her immortal honour, that only one gave the proposals in form, that one a warm-hearted soldier, who had all his life done things in a hurry. But the reader, if he please, may imagine the suitors themselves imparting the secret of their attachment—some telling their sisters *in confidence* (the sure method of expeditious and extensive promulgation), and some proudly owning it, as proof of their good taste and right judgment——. But enough of loves and lovers.

Timotheus Adam Wronghead, Esq. dressed, danced, and flirted, till he could dress, dance, and flirt no more; and then, all his earthly business ended, he died of extreme

extreme old age, whilst his father was yet a hale active man.

Jack made such strong love to Susan Knowlesdon, that though she at first said "no," she afterwards whispered "yes;" and the moment Jack could write "captain" to his name, he claimed and received her as his bride.

Mrs. Mary Knowlesdon continued the same determined old maid, and Mr. Knowlesdon the same determined old bachelor, that we have seen them, doing more good in the course of their noiseless but busy lives, than we could record in two volumes duodecimo, closely printed. Mrs. Mary received the last calm sigh of the resigned and grateful cripple, Mrs. Barbara Maude, who closed a life of active virtue with a death of cheerful hope. Mr. Knowlesdon took care that "her children" should be educated to form useful and happy members of society.

Here ends our artless tale.——Reader, farewell! we thank you for your patience in

in attending us through it. We beseech you to overlook our deficiencies, and to forgive our mistakes. We have not essayed to draw the fanciful—the marvellous, but the probable—the true. Have we succeeded in our aim? look around, and try us by the tests of observation and experience.

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